

DOROTHY DALE'S PROMISE



MARGARET PENROSE


Miss

Dorothy

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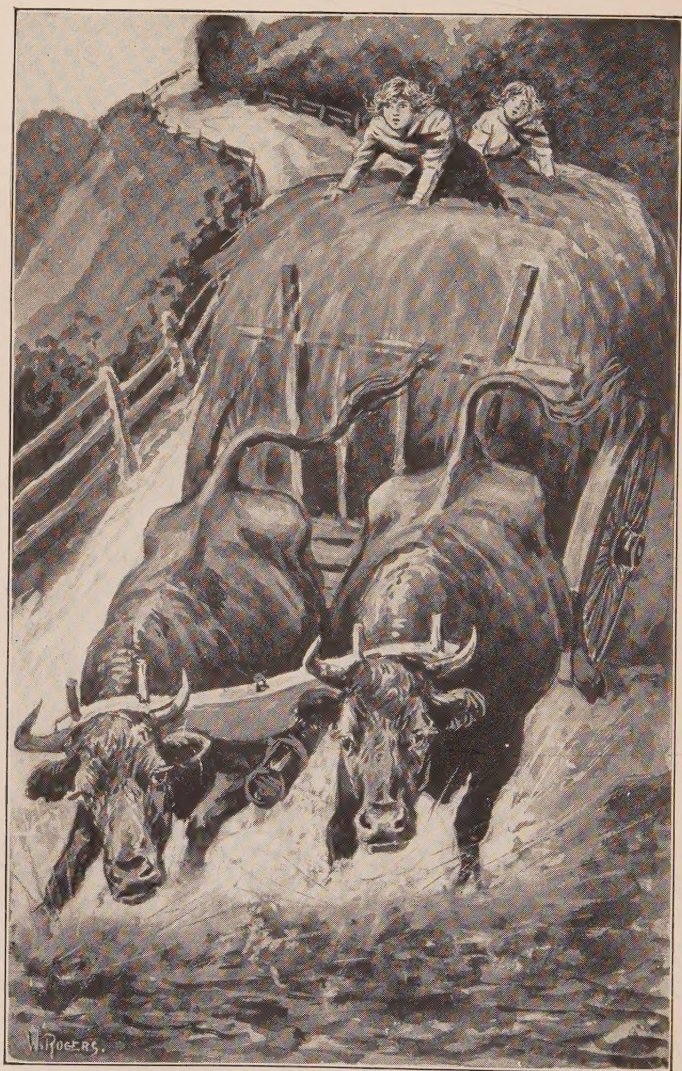
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INTO THE RIVER THEY PLUNGED.
Dorothy Dale's Promise.

DOROTHY DALE'S PROMISE

BY
MARGARET PENROSE

AUTHOR OF "DOROTHY DALE: A GIRL OF TO-DAY," "DOROTHY
DALE AT GLENWOOD SCHOOL," "THE MOTOR
GIRLS SERIES," ETC.

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BOOKS BY MARGARET PENROSE

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DOROTHY DALE'S PROMISE

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DOROTHY DALE'S PROMISE

CHAPTER I

"THE BAD PENNIES"

THE train started a second after the two almost breathless girls entered the half-empty chair car. They came in with a rush, and barely found their seats and got settled in them before the easily rolling train had pulled clear of the station and the yards.

"Back to dear old Glenwood School, Doro!" cried Tavia Travers, fairly hugging her more sober companion. "How do you feel about it?"

"*De-lighted*, Miss," laughed Dorothy Dale. "After our trying experiences in New York—— Well! a country life is strenuous enough for me, I guess."

"But we *did* have some fun, Doro. And how we got the best of that hateful Akerson man! I just *hate* that fellow. I could *beat* him!"

"Your feeling is not scriptural," groaned Doro-

thy, though her eyes twinkled. "Don't you know, if you are struck on one cheek you should turn the other also?"

"But suppose you're hit on the nose?" demanded Tavia. "One hasn't *two* noses!"

"Well, Aunt Winnie is well rid of that Aker-son," said Dorothy, with a little sigh of satisfaction.

"And your cousins, Ned and Nat, have you to thank for the salvation of their income," returned Tavia.

"Us, you mean, laughed Dorothy. "You had more to do with the showing up of that real estate agent than I had, Tavia."

"Nonsense—— Oh, here's the station where the girls may join us. Do let me open that window, Doro! I don't care if it *is* cold outside. I want to see if they are on the platform."

Tavia was already struggling with the window. But windows in cars are made to stick, it would seem. Tavia cast a pleading glance from her big eyes at the trim young brakeman just then coming through the car.

"Please!" Tavia's eyes said just as plainly as though she had spoken the word; but the young brakeman shook his head gravely.

"Do you really want it open, Miss?" he asked, hesitating at the chairs occupied by the two friends.

"I want to see out—just a little bit," said Tavia, pouting.

"But if anybody objects——" the young brakeman continued, taking hold of the fixtures of the sash with his gloved hands.

"Isn't he just a dear?" murmured Tavia to Dorothy, but loud enough for the young railroad man to hear.

"Do hush, Tavia!" gasped her friend.

The young man opened the window. The exertion seemed to have been considerable, for he grew red to the very tips of his ears while he was raising the sash!

"Oh, thank you—so much!" gushed Tavia, perfectly cool. And when the brakeman had gone, she turned to Dorothy, and demanded:

"Didn't I say that prettily? Just like a New York society girl would say it—the one who took us to tea that time in the tea room that used to be a millionaire's stable; do you remember?"

"You are just dreadful, Tavia!" groaned Dorothy Dale. "Will you never learn to behave?"

"There they are!" shrieked Tavia, with her head out of the window. "There are all the 'bad pennies'—they always turn up again, you know."

The train was slowing down and the long platform of the junction came into view.

"Who's there?" begged Dorothy, willing to

learn the details from her more venturesome companion.

"Ned Ebony—yes, ma'am! And there's Cologne. Oh, bully! everybody's here. This way, girls!" cried Tavia as the car passed a group of merry-faced girls of about their own age. "I hope you've all got chairs in this car."

And, by good fortune, they had! Within the next few moments nearly a dozen of the pupils of Glenwood School had joined the chums—and all of these newcomers, as well as Dorothy and Tavia, belonged to the class that would graduate from the famous old school the coming June.

"Tell us all about New York—do!" cried Ned Ebony, otherwise Edna Black.

"And Miss Mingle!" urged Rose-Mary, whom the other girls called "Cologne" most of the time. "Is she coming back to Glenwood School to teach music?"

"Poor little Mingle has had a hard time," Dorothy said. "But she is coming back to us—and we must treat her nicely, girls."

"Oh, we must!" added Tavia. "Better than I treated her feather-bed."

The girls all laughed at that, for it had been Tavia's last prank at Glenwood to shower little Miss Mingle with the feathers from her own special tick.

"But about New York," urged one of the

other girls who had never been to the metropolis. "We're just dying to know something about it, Doro."

"And if it is as wicked as they say it is," cried another.

"And as nice," urged Ned Ebony.

"And as horribly dirty as they say," went on Cologne.

"And the subways—and elevated trains—and all the rest of it," came the seemingly unending demands.

"Help! help! 'Ath-thith-tanth, pleath!'" cried Tavia. "That's the way one of the girl's in a big store called the floorwalker—jutht like that!"

"Now, go ahead and tell us something wonderful," begged Cologne.

"See here," said Dorothy, laughing, and diving into her handbag. "Here's something that I cut out of the paper. It is how New York struck the wondering eye of an Arab who visited it recently. He sent this letter to his brother at home:

"'People in America travel like rats under the ground, and like squirrels in the air, and the buildings are so high that people have to be put in square boxes and pulled to the top by heavy ropes. In the day the sun furnishes the light as in Morocco. At night the light is as strong as in the day, but people here do not seem to have much use for

sleep, as the streets are just as crowded at night as in the day.'

"There!" laughed Dorothy. "That is New York—that, and operas, and theatres, and 'tea-fights,' and automobiles whizzing, and car gongs banging, and the rattle of steam riveters, and newsboys shrieking, and——"

"My turn! I'll relieve you," interposed Tavia. "There are lots of nice boys—real *dressy* boys—and it's fun to go to the tea-rooms, for you see everybody—and they dance! And we've learned to dance the very newest dances——"

"Oh, Tavia!" gasped Dorothy. "Only with each other—you know that. We've just picked up some of the steps, seeing others do it—and practised in our room at Aunt Winnie's."

"There! She always spoils everything," declared Tavia. "I was just making Ned Ebony's eyes 'bulge right out' at our wickedness. I think——"

At that moment brakes were put on the train and the girls were suddenly tumbled together in quite a heap. There was something ahead to cause this sudden stoppage, and Tavia struggled with her window again. It went up easier this time. Perhaps that was because there was no good looking young man—in or out of uniform—near at hand.

"Oh! it's a fire!" gasped Cologne, looking over Tavia's shoulder when the latter got the window open.

"On the tracks!" declared Tavia.

Dorothy got a glimpse of the fire now.

"It's the bridge over Caloom Creek," she cried. "It's all ablaze! I declare, girls, suppose we are held here all night!"

"Don't mention such a thing!" groaned Ned Ebony. "It's only twenty miles from here to Glenwood."

"Right," agreed Tavia; "and Belding is the next station beyond the creek."

"Let's go out and ask the railroad men if we can't get over the river and get a train on to Glenwood at once," suggested Dorothy Dale.

"Let's!" agreed Tavia, with a giggle. "That nice young brakeman, Doro—I'll ask him, if you are bashful."

But it was the conductor in charge of the train they found when the hilarious party of school girls got out with their hand baggage.

"How are you going to get across the river, young ladies?" he wanted to know. "The highway bridge is a mile through the woods."

"But we know all about this river," spoke up Tavia. "There are stepping stones across it right below this old railroad bridge. We've been across them before—haven't we, Doro?"

"In the summer," her friend admitted.

"Well, you can try it," said the conductor.

"That bridge is going to be unstable, even if they get the fire out. A train may not cross from either side before to-morrow."

"Oh!" cried Ned Ebony, "we could never wait that long!"

"Come on!" commanded Tavia, leading the way into a path beside the railroad tracks. "Let's at least see if the stones are uncovered."

"You'll probably find transportation from Belding to the Glen," said the conductor, as the girls started on.

"Come on, now," said Tavia. "Let's show our pluck. Who's afraid of a little water?"

"I'm always seasick on the water," murmured Cologne.

"Never heard of anybody being troubled by *mal de mer* going over stepping stones," snorted Tavia, in disgust. "Come on!"

There was a fringe of bushes along both sides of the creek. This path beside the railroad tracks forked, and one branch of it led right down to the stepping stones. The water was rough; but there was no ice, and the top of each stone was bare and dry.

Years and years before the people living in the neighborhood had put these flat-top boulders into the creek-bed, because the light wooden bridges

were forever being carried away by the floods. Of course that was before the day of the railroad.

Tavia started across the stones, and Dorothy followed her. One after the other they got over safely. But Ned Ebony's shoe came untied and she was last.

Perhaps she was careless; perhaps she tripped on her shoelace; perhaps she was heedless enough to step on the edge of a certain small boulder that Tavia warned her was not exactly steady.

However it was, the boulder rolled, poor Edna "sprawled" in the air for a moment to get her balance, and then the rock turned over and she went "splash!" into the water.

CHAPTER II

CELIA MORAN, OF THE "FINDLING"

"To the rescue!" shrieked Tavia, charging back to the stepping stones. "Forward, my bold hearties! Man overboard! Who's got a rope?"

Then she lost the power of speech in a burst of laughter; for certain it was, poor Ned Ebony was an awfully funny sight!

But Dorothy was at hand to do something practical. She sprang back upon the nearest boulder to the one that had turned under her unfortunate schoolmate, and in half a minute she had dragged Edna out of the cold water.

"Oh! *oh!* OH!" sputtered Edna in *crescendo*. "I—I'm drowned—dead! Oh, do help me out! You mean thing, Tavia! Oh, I'm frozen!"

The water was ice cold, and the temperature of the air was close to the freezing point. This adventure might easily become serious, and Dorothy knew it.

"We must hurry her to the Belding station," she cried. "Come on, Neddie! You must run."

"Run? I can't. See how water-soaked my skirt is. I *can't* run."

"You must!" declared Dorothy. "Come, Tavia—take her other hand. Have you her bag, Cologne? We'll run ahead with her and see if we can find somebody to take her in. She must be dried and have other clothing. Oh, hurry!"

"I can't run, Doro Dale! I tell you I can't," wailed the saturated girl.

But they made her hurry, and in fifteen minutes had her in the sitting room belonging to the station agent's wife, where she was helped to disrobe, dried, dosed with hot tea, and finally managed to dress herself in dry garments borrowed from the bags of her schoolmates, the contents of her own bag being wet, too.

There was no chance to get on to Glenwood for two hours; so the party of schoolgirls must of necessity occupy themselves as best they might around the Belding station. Meanwhile a better introduction to Dorothy Dale and her friends, as well as a brief sketch of "what has gone before" in this series, may not come amiss.

In "Dorothy Dale: A Girl of To-day" my heroine was some three years younger than she is when she makes her bow in this present volume. But even then she was a bright, sprightly girl, more thoughtful than the average of her age, perhaps; yet thoroughly a *girl*. Nevertheless, be-

cause of the illness of her father, Major Dale, of Dalton (she was motherless) Dorothy took up the work of publishing his weekly paper, *The Dalton Bugle*.

At that time the paper was all the Dales had to depend on for a livelihood; therefore Dorothy's success as a publisher and editor meant much to herself and her immediate family which, beside the Major, consisted of her two much younger brothers, Joe and Roger. With her closest chum, Octavia Travers, Dorothy had many adventures while running the paper—some merely amusing but others of a really perilous nature.

Dorothy, however, survived these adventures, Major Dale recovered, and in the end secured a generous legacy which had been left him, which enhancement of the family's fortune made possible the writing of the second volume of the series: "Dorothy Dale at Glenwood School."

This story served, too, to introduce more effectually Dorothy's aunt, Mrs. Winnie White, and her two boys, Nat and Ned, who lived at North Birchlands and with whom Major Dale and his motherless children had now, for some time, made their home. At school Dorothy had some fun, many adventures, and several little troubles; but with the help and companionship of Tavia, who was enabled to go to the school, too, after a very few months both chums decided that Glen-

wood was the very finest school "that ever happened."

"Dorothy Dale's Great Secret" came very nearly being Tavia Travers' undoing, and that sprightly damsel's adventures, and her friend's wholesome influence over her, are fully related in the third volume of the above name.

In the fourth volume, "Dorothy Dale and Her Chums," Dorothy came into really startling association with some gypsies and their queens; but there is likewise in the story plenty of school fun and excitement and almost a rebellion of the Glenwood girls against a harsh teacher who had charge while Mrs. Pangborn, the principal, was away.

Dorothy and her chums, with the help of Nat and Ned White and some of their friends, solved the mystery of the "castle" in the next volume, which is well entitled, "Dorothy Dale's Queer Holidays." The holidays were queer, indeed, and there was a time when serious trouble seemed to threaten them all.

In "Dorothy Dale's Camping Days," the sixth volume of the series, Dorothy was mistaken for a demented girl who had escaped from a sanitarium, and our heroine suffered imprisonment and much anxiety before the mistake was explained. In this, as in "Dorothy Dale's School Rivals," the seventh book, Tavia Travers had a prominent part in the action of the story; but Tavia was a

flyaway and often Dorothy was anxious about her. The irresponsible Tavia had a heart of gold, however, and her love for Dorothy, and her loyalty to her in any and every difficulty, kept the girl from going very far wrong.

The girls had boarded the train for Glenwood, which had met this obstruction of the burning bridge, after the winter vacation; and that vacation had been spent by Dorothy and Tavia in New York. The account of the fun and adventures they had there is too long to tell here, but it is all related in the volume next preceding this, entitled, "Dorothy Dale in the City."

The chums not only found the great metropolis a veritable fairyland of surprises, but they had adventures galore. By a fortunate turn of circumstances the two girls were able to save Dorothy's Aunt Winnie from the machinations of a dishonest real estate agent who had been handling some of that lady's property; and likewise they had been able to befriend Miss Mingle, the music teacher at Glenwood School, and her invalid sister.

As the other girls were looking after Ned Ebony, and offering her the contents of their own bags—from "mule" slippers to powder-puffs—Dorothy was not needed; so she went back to the railroad station to make sure that no train was made up for Glenwood without her and her friends being aware of it.

There, in the waiting room, she spied a tall, burly woman, with a very hard red face, who had just placed upon one of the benches a little girl of some six or seven years. The child was poorly dressed, and although she was not crying, she looked very woe-begone indeed.

The big woman gave the child a little shake when she had placed her on the bench.

"There now, Celia Moran!" she snapped. "You stay put; will yer? I never seen no child more like an eel than *you* be."

"Am—am I really like a—neel, Mrs. Hogan?" demanded the little girl, timidly. "Does a—neel have feets an' hands?"

"You shet up with your questions!" commanded the woman, shaking a finger at her. "As sure as me name's Ann Hogan I'd never tuk ye from that Findling Asylum if I'd knowed ye had a tongue in your mout' that's hung in the middle and wags both ends. Sorra the day I tuk ye!"

Little Celia Moran put a tentative finger in her mouth to see if it was verily so—that her tongue was "hung" different from other people's tongues.

"Are—are you *sure* my tongue's that way, Mrs. Hogan?" she asked, plaintively as the big woman was turning away. "It—it *feels* all right."

"Now, you shet up!" warned Mrs. Hogan, wrathfully. "Ax me another question an' I'll spank ye—so I will! I'm goin' now to find Jim

Bentley's waggin'. Do you sit right there still—don't move! If ye do, I'll know it when I come back an' 'twill be the wuss for ye."

With this threat the big woman departed with an angry stride. Dorothy had stopped to listen to the conversation; and she was greatly interested in the little girl. She immediately went and sat down by Celia Moran.

She was not a very big girl for her age, being thin and "wiggly." It did seem quite impossible for her to keep either her limbs or her tongue still.

But she was, without doubt, a most appealing little thing. Dorothy smiled at her, and Dorothy's smile was bound to "make friends" with any one.

"I guess you don't know me; do you?" asked the child, looking up from under long, black lashes at Dorothy. Those lashes, and the velvety black eyes they almost hid, were all the really pretty features the child possessed. She was not plump enough to be pretty of form, and the expression of her features was too shrewd and worldly-wise to make a child of her age attractive.

"I guess you don't know me; do you?" she repeated, looking in a sly little way at Dorothy.

"Oh, yes, I do," declared Dorothy Dale, laughing outright. "You are Celia Moran," she added,

remembering the name the sour-faced woman had used.

"But you don't know where I come from?"

The ugly gingham uniform she wore told *that* story only too well. Dorothy became grave at once.

"You come from some orphan asylum, my dear."

"From the Findling," said the little girl, pursing up her lips and nodding.

"From a foundling asylum?"

"Yes'm. But I wasn't really a 'findling.' I didn't come there like the babies do. I was two an' a ha'f years old when they took me in. That ain't no baby; is it?"

"Two and a half? Why, that's a *big* girl," agreed Dorothy.

"'Course it is. But my papa had been dead a long time; and my mamma, too. And then my auntie died, so I had to go to the Findling."

"And wasn't there anybody else to look out for you?" asked the interested Dorothy.

"Only Tom. And he went away."

"Tom who?"

"Tom Moran. He's my brother. I don't suppose *you* know him; do you?"

"I don't think I do," said Dorothy, shaking her head.

"Oh, you'd remember him—of course," confided

Celia, impressively. "For he is so big, and strong, and—and red-headed. Yes. He's got awful red hair. And he builds bridges, and things. Oh, I can remember him—*just as easy!* So I must have been a big girl when they brought me to the Findling."

"And you haven't seen your brother since?"

"No'm. And he'd gone away before auntie died. That's why he doesn't come for me, I s'pose. So the matron says. He don't know where I is," she added, with a little sigh.

"And now Mrs. Hogan's got me. She's tooked me to bring up. And she says she's going to bring me up right strict," added the child, pursing her lips and shaking her head in her queer, old-fashioned way. "She spects it's goin' to be jes' a *job* to do it!"

CHAPTER III

THE PROMISE

DOROTHY DALE was delighted with the little one; but she pitied her so, too! Covertly the schoolgirl wiped her eyes, while the child prattled on.

"Sometime I know Tom Moran will come for me. Oh, yes! He mus' be very smart, for he builds bridges and things. My auntie what died told the Findling Asylum matron so. But somehow the letters the matron wrote to Tom Moran never bringed him back.

"Of course, he didn't get 'em. If he had, he'd come for me. And he'll come for me anyway, and find me—even if Mrs. Ann Hogan has got me.

"You see, all us Morans is jes' as *smart*! Somebody said I was jes' the cutest little thing they ever see," and Celia looked up again, slily, at her new friend.

"I really believe you are—you little dear!" cried Dorothy, suddenly hugging her.

"I'm glad you like me so much," said Celia,

quite placidly. "For then you'll do something for me, I know."

"Of course I will, my dear," agreed the older girl.

"Thank you," said Celia, demurely. "What I want is that you should find Tom Moran for me. If I could jes' find him once I know I wouldn't have to stay with Mrs. Hogan. For I jes' *know*," concluded the old-fashioned little thing, shaking her head, "that she's goin' to have a—nawful job bringing me up strict—I jes' know she is!"

"You poor, motherless little thing!" choked Dorothy. "I'll try my best to find your brother. I really will, dear."

"That'll be nice," confided Celia. "For I think I shall like better bein' with him than with Mrs. Hogan."

"And where is Mrs. Hogan going to take you, dear?" asked Dorothy.

"To her farm. A farm is a nawful nice place," said Celia, gravely. "Was you ever at a farm?"

"Oh, yes."

"So was I," confided Celia. "Last summer. They sends a bunch of us kids from the Findling to a farm—O-o-o, *ever* so far away from the Findling. And an old lady got me at the station, an' we drove—O-o-o, *ever* so far to where there wasn't any houses, or streets, or wagons, or music machines, or saloons, or delicatessen stores.



"AND WHERE IS MRS. HOGAN GOING TO TAKE YOU, DEAR?"

Dorothy Dale's Promise.

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"There was just one house where the old lady lived. And it was kinder lonesome; but the grass was there and bushes all flowered out like what's in the flower-store windows. An' they smelled sweet," continued Celia, big eyed with her remembrance of her first experience in the country.

"I felt funny inside—all lonesome, like as though there was a hole here," and she put her little hands upon her stomach to show where she felt the emotion which she could so ill express—the homesickness for the sights, and sounds, and bustle of the city.

"But the old lady was real nice to me," confessed Celia. "And she gave me real nice things to eat. And—Oh, yes! she laughed at me so. You see, I was a nawful greeny!"

"I expect you were, dear," chuckled Dorothy. "You had never seen the country before?"

"No, I never had. And I saw the chickens go to roost, and the old lady caught one chicken and began to pick his feathers off, and that's when she laughed so at me."

"Why?" asked Dorothy.

"You see, I didn't know about it, and I asked her: 'Do you take off their clo'es every night, lady?' And of course they *don't*," finished Celia, laughing shrilly herself now. "Chickens ain't like folks."

"No; not very much like folks," agreed Dorothy, greatly amused.

"No. We eat—ed that chicken the next day," said Celia. "An' it was nawful good. We don't have chicken—much—at the Findling."

"Perhaps it will be nice at Mrs. Hogan's for you, Celia, dear," suggested the older girl. "Perhaps it will be as nice as it was at that other farm."

But the little one shook her head slowly and for the first time the tears welled into her eyes and over-ran them, falling drop by drop down her thin cheeks. She did not sob, or cry, as a child usually does.

"No," she whispered. "Mrs. Ann Hogan isn't like the good lady I was with for two weeks las' summer. No, Mrs. Hogan isn't like *that*."

"But she'll learn to love you, too," declared Dorothy, determined to cheer the child if she could.

"No," said Celia again, gravely. "I've got to 'earn my salt,' Mrs. Hogan says. An' I guess I'll hafter work nawful hard to earn *that*, for I like things salt," and she shook her head.

"You see, at that other farm, the lady didn't make me work. I played. And I watched the birds, and the chickens, and the horses and cows. Why," she said, her face clearing up with the elasticity of youth, "Why, there was an old man

that brought his cow along the road to feed every day. The grass was good beside the road and the old man had no reg'lar lot for her to feed in, so my lady friend said."

The little old-fashioned way in which she used this last phrase almost convulsed Dorothy, despite her feeling of pity for the child.

"And I used to watch the cow. It was a pleasant cow," said Celia, gravely. "And sometimes the old man would sit down under a tree in the lane, and he'd open a newspaper an' read to the cow while she was chewin' grass. She must ha' been a real intel'gent cow," concluded Celia, wagging her little head.

"Oh, dear me! you funny little thing!" murmured Dorothy. "I do wish Tavia could hear you."

But this she said to herself. Celia Moran talked on, in her old-fashioned way: "No'm; I ain't goin' to like it so well at Mrs. Ann Hogan's. I—I'm 'most afraid of Mrs. Hogan. I—I don't think she likes little girls a-tall."

"Oh! I hope she'll like you," said Dorothy.

"But you will find my brother, Tom?" urged Celia, earnestly. "Tom Moran will take care of me if he finds me. I know he will."

"I will do my very best to find him, dear," promised the bigger girl, again, with her arm about Celia's shoulders.

In the distance she saw the grenadier Mrs. Hogan approaching, and she had a feeling that the woman would not be pleased if she knew Celia had been talking to anybody.

"Here, dear," said Dorothy, hastily, drawing out her purse and giving the child a crisp dollar bill. "You hide that away. Maybe you will want to spend some of it for candies, or ribbons, or something. Let me kiss you. You dear little thing! I will try to find your brother just as hard as ever I tried to do anything in my life."

"I guess you can find him," returned Celia, with assurance, looking wistfully up at Dorothy Dale. "You're so big, you know. I want to see you again."

"And you shall. I'll find out where Mrs. Hogan lives and come to see you," declared Dorothy.

But then the big woman came and grabbed the child by the wrist. "Come on, you!" she exclaimed. "We gotter hurry now, for Bentley's waitin'."

Celia looked back once over her shoulder as she was borne so hurriedly away. The little, thin face was twisted into a pitiful smile, and Dorothy bore the remembrance of that smile in her heart for many a long day.

Mrs. Hogan had been so abrupt that Dorothy had not plucked up courage to accost her. When she asked one of the railroad men if he knew

where Jim Bentley, or Mrs. Hogan, lived, the man had never heard the names.

There was no time then to seek further for the locality of the farm to which little Celia Moran was being taken, for a train was backing down beside the platform and the conductor told her it would start in ten minutes for Glenwood.

So Dorothy ran to gather her scattered flock of schoolmates. Ned Ebony's coat was dry enough to put on; but she had to go dressed in a conglomeration of other garments, some of which did not fit her very well. Tavia and the others made much fun over Edna's plight.

"That hat!" groaned Tavia. "It—it looks just like you'd had it in pawn, Ned."

"In pawn! what do you mean?" queried Edna, doubtfully, and putting up both hands to the really disgraceful-looking hat—for *it* had been dried out before the sitting room stove at the railroad station agent's, too.

"Anyway, it looks like it had been in soak, Neddie, dear," giggled Tavia. "And to use a slang phrase——"

"I should say that *was* slang," returned Edna, in disgust. "The very commonest kind—'in soak,' indeed!"

"And that bird on your hat," pursued Tavia, wickedly. "That is sure enough one of those extinct fowl you read about."

"Lots you know about extinct birds," sniffed Edna.

"There's the dodo," suggested one of the other girls.

"Oh, I know what an extinct bird is," declared Cologne. "It's Billy, our poor old canary—poor thing! The cat got him this morning before I left home, so he's extinct now!"

Ned Ebony couldn't take her coat off because she wore Dorothy's morning gown instead of a street dress. And she had on Tavia's slippers instead of real shoes; and there hadn't been a guimpe in any girl's bag that would fit her, so she was afraid of removing the coat as she might catch cold. She had been used to wearing a fur-piece around her neck and that much bedraggled article was in the big bundle of her half-dried belongings, thrust into the baggage rack overhead.

"I know that fur is just ruined," she moaned. "And it's brand new, too."

"Never mind," giggled Tavia. "I bet it's only cat's fur, and there's slathers of cats at the Glen. We can trap some and make you a new scarf just as good."

"Miss Smartie!"

"I declare, Ned, you looked just like a half-drowned pussy-cat yourself when Doro hauled you ashore."

"Yes," complained Edna, "you others would

have left me to swim out as best I might alone—no doubt of that. It is always Doro who comes to the rescue.”

Dorothy smiled half-heartedly. She did not join the general cross-fire of joking and repartee. She could not get the wan little face of Celia Moran out of her mind—that wistful little smile of hers—while she seemed to hear again the sweet little voice say: “An’ I’m jes’ the cutest little thing you ever see!”

But Dorothy was afraid that, as cute as she was, the ogress would be too much for her!

“That’s just what that Hogan woman is—an ogress,” thought Dorothy.

Celia had been woefully afraid of Mrs. Hogan; yet how brave she had been, too!

“Somehow I’ll find her brother—Tom Moran—for her,” thought Dorothy. “I will! I must!”

CHAPTER IV

A PORCINE PICNIC

THERE were five bows of ribbon laid out in a row on Tavia's bureau, each with a cunning little collar of the same attached. Pink, green—real apple green—mauve, tango and orange.

"What under the sun can she be doing with those?" murmured Dorothy, when she chanced to see them, and touching the pretty bows lightly with her fingers. "Why! Tavia must be going to introduce a new style. Are they ribbon bracelets? How pretty!"

It was the day following the hilarious arrival of "the bad pennies" at Glenwood School, after the railroad bridge had burned and delayed them, and Dorothy herself had met little Celia Moran, the girl from the "Findling."

Mrs. Pangborn had not yet arrived. She had been delayed by some family difficulty, it was understood, and really, for these first days of the new term, "things were going every which-way," as Tavia herself declared.

There was a new teacher in charge, too—Miss Olaine. Miss Olaine was tall, and thin, and grim. Tavia declared she looked just like “a sign post on the road to trouble.”

“And you want to be careful you don’t fall under her eye, Tavia,” Cologne had advised. “The girls who have been here through the vacation say she’s a Tartar.”

“Humph!” the headstrong Tavia had declared, “she may be the cream of Tartar, for all I care. I shall take the starch out of her.”

Now, had Dorothy Dale chanced to hear this reckless promise of her chum she might have been more suspicious of the five pretty ribbon bows. Indeed, she would have been suspicious of every particular thing Tavia said, or did.

But, as it chanced, Miss Olaine seemed no more harsh or forbidding to Dorothy than any other teacher. Dorothy was not one to antagonize the teachers, no matter who they might be.

“Five bows,” murmured Dorothy again. “I wonder just what they can be for? Why, they’re too small, I do believe—those rings are—for Tavia’s wrist—or mine.

“Five of them! One for each finger of a hand—one for each of the ‘five senses,’ I declare!—one for each of Jacob Bensell’s young ones who live in the cottage down the road. There’s five of *them*.

"And there's five cows in Middleton's pasture—though I don't suppose Tavia is going to decorate them. And there's five cunning little pigs in Jake's pen—he showed them to me last night," and Dorothy laughed, as she touched the pretty bows again. "I can't imagine——"

In bounced Tavia herself. "Oh, *you* here?" she cried, and went right over to the bureau and tumbled the five pretty ribbon bows into her top drawer and shut the drawer quickly.

"I got here just a minute ahead of you," said Dorothy.

"Oh!"

"What are the cunning little wristlets for?" demanded Dorothy, curiously.

"'Wristlets'?"

"You know what I mean. The ribbons?"

"Oh—now—Doro——"

"What are they for?" repeated Dorothy.

"Just to make curious folk ask questions, I guess," chuckled Tavia, her big brown eyes dancing, and just then several of the other girls tumbled into the room and there was so much noise and talk that Dorothy quite forgot the ribbon bows.

"That old Olaine is just the meanest——" from Cologne.

"Did you hear what she said to little Luttrell when she couldn't find her skates? And Luttrell's

folks can't buy her skates every day, I don't believe," declared Ned Ebony, hotly.

"Did you hear her, Doro?" demanded Nita Brent.

"No," admitted Dorothy Dale.

"Why, she told Luttrell not to cry like a baby about it; probably somebody found them that needed them more than *she* did. Nasty old——"

"Hold on! Hold on!" advised Dorothy.

Tavia laughed rather harshly. "Miss Olaine is just as comforting as the rooster was when Mrs. Hen was in tears because one of her little ones had been sacrificed to make a repast for the visiting clergyman.

"'Cheer up, Madam,' said Mr. Rooster. 'You should rejoice that your son is entering the ministry. He was poorly qualified for a lay member, anyhow,'" and Tavia laughed again, as did the others.

"Oh, Tavia, that's ridiculous," said Cologne. "Aren't you sorry for little Luttrell?"

"And don't you just hate Miss Olaine?" demanded Ebony.

"Oh, you leave her to me," said Tavia, cheerfully. "We'll get square with her if she stays at Glenwood Hall for long."

"You would better have a care," warned Dorothy. "I don't believe that the lady will stand much fooling, Tavia."

"'Fooling'?" repeated Tavia, making "big eyes" at her chums. "How you talk! I would not *fool* with Miss Olaine——"

"I guess not," cried one of the other girls. "I heard what she said to Miss Mingle."

"What was that?"

"She said 'she hoped she knew how to handle a lot of half-grown, saucy young-ones!' Doesn't that sound nice?"

"Us—young-ones!" gasped Dorothy.

"What a slap at our dignity—and we to graduate in June," said Cologne, heavily. "I guess that settles Miss Olaine——"

"You leave her to me," said Tavia, again, and nodding with emphasis. "I shall just square things up with her."

"Oh, Tavia!" cried Edna Black. "What will you do?"

"Nothing at all, I hope," interposed Dorothy.

Her chum began to giggle. "You just wait," she said.

"Do, *do* be careful," warned Dorothy when the other girls had gone some time later, leaving her and her chum alone in the dormitory.

"Am I not always careful?" demanded Tavia, opening her big eyes wider than ever.

"You're usually careful to get into trouble," sighed Dorothy.

"Oh, *Doro*——"

"And see the numbers of times the rest of us have had to help you out."

"You mean *you* have had to help me out. You're a good old thing, Doro—just like a grandma to me! Come and kiss your youngest grandchild, Doro—that's a dear!"

"Go away, do!" cried Dorothy, though she had to laugh at Tavia, too. "You are as irresponsible as ever."

"Of course, Granny," giggled Tavia, as she put a wee dab of talcum powder on her nose.

"But don't you *dare* do anything to make Mrs. Pangborn send you home before you are properly graduated," warned Dorothy.

"Suspended from the Glen? Well, I guess not!" cried her friend.

But there was something in the air. Dorothy knew it. Nobody else seemed to be in the secret but Tavia, however; and for Tavia to have any secret at all from her chum——

Well, Dorothy could only wait. She was sure Tavia "would show her hand" before long. But this time the prank was revealed to Dorothy too late for the latter to save her fly-away friend from the results of her folly.

The next evening she saw Tavia lurking in the shadow of the hedge down towards Bensell's place. Was that Jake's oldest boy who ran away when Dorothy approached?

"My goodness! how you startled me!" drawled Tavia when Dorothy pinched her chum's plump arm.

"Can't you let them be in peace, Tavia?" laughed Dorothy, who knew very well that her chum had not been startled at all.

"*What?* Oh! Let who be in peace?" demanded Tavia, and then Dorothy, in amaze, knew her friend *was* startled.

"The boys. Have you got to practice your fell designs on Sammy Bensell?"

"How ridiculous!" chuckled Tavia, with a toss of her head, and plainly relieved. "Poor Sammy!"

And even then Dorothy had not suspected the secret. Tavia went back to the Hall with her. Everything seemed as calm as could be. And then, the next forenoon, when recitations began in Miss Olaine's room, the storm broke.

Behind the desk and platform devoted to the teacher's use was the door of a little retiring room. Soon after the class assembled there were peculiar noises heard in that room. Miss Olaine stood up and looked at the door.

"Who is in that room, young ladies?" she demanded.

Silence—oh, a great deal of silence! You could cut it with a knife.

And the most amazed-looking person in the

room was Tavia Travers. Miss Olaine threw open the door with a savage sort of exclamation. The next instant she shrieked shrilly, and hopped into the seat of her own chair, standing upright there and holding her skirts close about her ankles.

"Who did this? Who did such an atrocious thing?" cried the teacher.

Out of the room there ran a cunning little white and black pig—and then another, and another, until the laughing, half-hysterical girls counted five of the little dears.

Each was scrubbed as clean as ever pig before was scrubbed! And their little pink eyes, and sharp noses, and pricked-up ears, and queer little tails, made the cunning little things as pretty as lapdogs.

"Who'd suppose she was afraid of pigs?" Edna Black said afterward. "And they so cute!"

But Miss Olaine shrieked and shrieked, as the pigs, each with one of those beautiful ribbon bows at the back of its fat neck, ran around and around her chair and desk. The platform was so high that they were afraid to jump down, for they were not more than two spans long.

"Oh, dear me!" groaned Dorothy. "Now Tavia is in for it again," for Tavia looked altogether too innocent to escape suspicion.

CHAPTER V

A MOUNTAIN OUT OF A MOLEHILL

"WHO did this?" demanded the teacher, from her perch. "Who *dared* commit such an atrocious act? Take them aw-a-ay!"

Her cry ending in such a wail, and her appearance suggesting approaching hysterics, Dorothy ran forward and tried to "shoo" the little piglets back into the closet. But most of the other girls were laughing so outrageously that they could not help, and the little squealers would not "shoo" worth a cent!

"Are you guilty of this deed, Miss Dale?" demanded Miss Olaine, seizing a ruler from the desk and trying to strike one of the pigs.

"Oh, don't hurt the cunning little things!" cried Dorothy. "Please don't, Miss Olaine. Oh!"

One of the little fellows got a crack from the ruler and his little tail straightened out and he made a noise like a rusty gate-hinge.

"Oh, oh! Please don't!" begged Dorothy.

"Please don't, Miss Olaine. I'll get them all shut up——"

Just then the two that she had managed to get into the closet again, ran out. The teacher was recovering from her fright; but her rage grew apace.

"You are guilty of this outrage, Miss Dale!" she accused. "You shall be punished for it—indeed yes!"

"You are mistaken, Miss Olaine," said Dorothy, ceasing to chase the tiny porkers, and facing the teacher standing in the chair.

"You did! You did it!" ejaculated the panting teacher. "You know all about the beasts——"

Then she let out another yell. One of the little fellows stood on its hind legs against Miss Olaine's chair and tried to sniff at that lady's boots.

"Get them back into that closet!" commanded Miss Olaine, savagely, and glaring at Dorothy. "Then I'll 'tend to you, Miss."

The whole class was silent by this time—"all but the pigs," as one of the girls whispered. They were astonished to hear Dorothy accused by the teacher—more astonished than they had been by the advent of the pigs in the classroom. As Ned Ebony pointed out afterward, pigs, or anything else, might come to recitation; but for Dorothy Dale to be accused of such a prank as this was quite too shocking!

Now, Dorothy was usually pretty sweet tempered; but the manner in which the new teacher spoke to her—and her unfair decision that *she*, Dorothy, was guilty of the prank—hurt and angered the girl.

She lifted her head grandly and looked Miss Olaine straight in the eye.

"You may get rid of the pigs yourself, as far as I am concerned," she said, distinctly "We are not in the habit of being accused of things at Glenwood Hall without there being some evidence against us."

She whirled around and went to her seat. Miss Olaine fairly screamed after her: "Come back here, Miss Saucebox, and get rid of these pigs."

"They're not *my* pigs," said Dorothy, resuming her seat, coolly.

"They're Jake Bensell's pigs, Miss Olaine," piped up one of the girls from a back seat.

"Run and get Mr. Bensell at once," commanded the teacher. "I'll get to the bottom of this——"

She almost pitched out of the chair then, and all the pigs ran out of the closet again and gamboled about the platform. Miss Olaine was held prisoner in her chair—"like a statue of Liberty defying the lightning" Tavia whispered to Edna.

"She's an awfully funny statue," giggled Ned. "But you've got Liberty and Ajax mixed, Tavia."

Miss Olaine would not allow any of the other

girls to help her after Dorothy had retreated. She waited impatiently until the girl who had run for Jake Bensell returned with the farmer in tow.

"Is your name Bensell?" demanded Miss Olaine from her perch on the chair.

"Yes, ma'am!" admitted Jake.

"Are these your pigs—these nasty beasts?"

Jake scratched his head slowly, and grinned. "I expect they be; but they air kinder dressed up," he said. "I heard the old one carryin' on all this mawnin"; but I didn't know the litter had strayed clean over here to school." and he chuckled.

"Take the insufferable creatures out of here!" commanded Miss Olaine. "And I believe you knew something about this disgusting exhibition of Tom-foolery!"

"Eh? No, ma'am! I didn't have nothin' to do with it," declared Jake. "And I'll have to go home for a bag to put them in——"

"Get them out of this room at once!" cried Miss Olaine. "I cannot stand this another minute."

Hysteria was threatening again. Jake drew a handful of corn from his pocket. The little pigs were just about big enough to begin to eat corn. He dropped a few kernels on the platform, trailed it along to the door of the small room, and then threw the rest of the corn inside. In two minutes

the last curly-cued tail disappeared within, and Jake closed the door on them.

"You kin come down, ma'am," he said, with a chuckle. "I'll go home for a bag, and I'll step into that room through the winder—it's open—and gather 'em all up."

"They must have been put in at that window," remarked Miss Olaine, suspiciously, and breathing heavily after sitting down again. "What do you know about it, sir?"

"Nothing a-tall—I assure ye," chuckled Jake.

"Those horrid beasts could not have got into that open window without help," snapped the teacher.

"I dunno," said the farmer, gracelessly. "They wander a good ways now——"

"I believe you are in league with that girl!" and she pointed her finger at Dorothy.

"Miss Dorothy? My goodness, no!" gasped Jake. "I'm dead sure *she* ain't in it," he added.

"Why not, sir?"

"'Cause she ain't never into no such practical jokes——"

"Jokes!" cried Miss Olaine. "She'll find it's no joke. It—it is a crime! She should be instantly dismissed. Oh, if Mrs. Pangborn were only here——"

Jake retreated, shaking his head. The class was in a buzz of excitement. Dorothy was angry

enough to reply in heat to Miss Olaine; but she had bethought herself now that she was likely to make the real culprit more trouble if she "fought back."

Of course that "real culprit" was Tavia. The practical joke had assumed rather serious proportions, however. Tavia looked commiseratingly at Dorothy. When she caught her friend's eye she mouthed:

"I'll tell her I did it, Doro."

"Don't you do it!" snapped Dorothy, almost out loud. "Let her find it out herself—if she can."

Dorothy was quite furious—to be doubted and insulted in this public way! She was almost glad that Tavia had originated the foolish joke with the cunning little pigs. Only—she well knew—in the end, Tavia must suffer for it.

Miss Olaine was not a person to give up the trail so easily. Edna whispered that she would be "a red Indian" on the scent of the joker. Poor Tavia would have to "take it" in the end; for of course she would not let Dorothy suffer for her sins.

The recitation hour drew to a close. Miss Olaine rapped for order at last. "Miss Dale will remain," she said.

The other girls looked at Dorothy, and she sat

down. But Tavia got up with an exclamation and tramped up to the desk.

"You can let her go, Miss Olaine," she declared. "Doro had nothing to do with the pigs. I did it."

"What is that?" demanded the teacher, stiffening and turning very red.

"Doro didn't have anything to do with putting the pigs in at the window. I did it before recitation. Doro didn't even know I was going to do it."

Tavia was defiant, and held her head up. Miss Olaine seemed to be doubly enraged because she had been deluded into making a mistake in the identity of the culprit.

"Why didn't you tell me so?" she demanded of Dorothy.

"I told you I was not guilty," replied Dorothy.

"But why didn't you tell me who *was* at fault?"

The girls all chorused a gasp of dismay. Dorothy actually turned pale with anger.

"To tell on another girl?" she cried. "We don't do things like that in Glenwood Hall, Miss Olaine."

"You are saucy, Miss!" declared the teacher. "Let me tell you that Mrs. Pangborn shall hear of your impudence when she returns. As for you, Octavia—is that your name?"

"So they tell me, Miss Olaine," returned Tavia, drawling in her speech.

"You go into this room!" commanded Miss Olaine, pointing at the door behind which the piglets had been shut. "You will find company there quite of your own kind, Miss. Come, march! I tell you, I mean to be obeyed. Go in there, Octavia."

"Oh—of course—if you mean it," said Tavia, lightly. "And the company of the pigs will be preferred to some I might mention."

But this last the graceless girl was wise enough to murmur too low for the teacher to hear. She went into the closet-like room instantly. The girls at once heard the pigs begin squealing. Tavia was rescuing the pretty ribbons before Mr. Bensell should return for his five little porkers.

Miss Olaine did not speak to Dorothy again, so the latter followed the other girls out of the classroom. Cologne was saying:

"She just made a mountain out of a molehill. It wasn't nothing—just a joke. And now she is going to tear the whole school up by the roots about it."

"You are just right, Rose-Mary," agreed Ned Ebony.

"Bear it in mind," said Dorothy, firmly, "we are going to have a lot of trouble while that teacher remains in Glenwood School. Oh, dear me! I didn't think I ever should be glad to leave

the Glen for good; but if Miss Olaine stays till June I know I shall be delighted to get away from here."

"Me, too!" "And I!" "And we-uns!" was the chorused agreement to this statement.

CHAPTER VI

DOROTHY IS "POUNCED UPON"

DOROTHY had two very serious problems in her mind all the time, and they sometimes interfered with the problems put forth by Miss Olaine to the class. The girl wanted to know where Mrs. Ann Hogan had her farm; and she wondered how she was to begin, even, to get into communication with Tom Moran, the big, redheaded brother that little Celia remembered "just as easy!"

"It's easy enough to guess where Celia came from—the 'Findling,' I mean. There's only one foundling asylum in the county and that is in the city. Celia has been used to the city all her life. I can write to the matron of the city children's asylum and find out all *she* knows about Celia and her folks.

"But even she wasn't able to find Tom Moran. It's pretty sure that Celia knew what she was talking about. She has got a big brother, and he went off to work before his aunt died, thinking he had left Celia in good care.

"‘He builds bridges, and things.’ That’s what Celia says. Those sort of men travel about a good deal. What does the paper call them—now—‘bridge and structural iron workers?’ Isn’t that it? And they have a very strong union.

"I’ve heard daddy talking about them," quoth Dorothy Dale. "And I’ve read about them in the papers, too. Very brave, hardy men they are, and they build the steel framework of the big office buildings—the great, tall skyscrapers—as well as bridges.

"Now, Tom Moran might have gone clear across the continent, following his job. Or he might be right around here somewhere. If he’s just one of the ordinary workmen I suppose he belongs to the union. If he’s a foreman, or something big in the work, he might not belong to the union; but they would know his name, just the same.

"Now!" reflected Dorothy. "I don’t believe that asylum matron ever thought to ask the union, in all these four years little Celia has been in her care. I’ll look up the local headquarters in the directory, and write them a nice letter about Tom Moran.

"As for learning where Mrs. Hogan has taken Celia, I’ll inquire of every farmer I see. Mrs. Hogan’s farm can’t be *very* far from here."

Dorothy Dale had come to these conclusions be-

fore ever Tavia got into trouble with Miss Olaine, and been shut up in the dressing-room with the pigs.

She had, indeed, gone to Mrs. Pangborn's office immediately after the recitation hour in which Tavia had fallen into disgrace, to look in the city directory for the address she wished to discover.

The older pupils were allowed to refer to the school reference books, and the like, as they chose. Mrs. Pangborn never objected to their doing so.

Therefore Dorothy's surprise was the greater when, as she bent over the book she desired to consult, a harsh voice demanded:

"What are you doing in here, Miss? Is *this* the place for you at this hour?"

It was Miss Olaine, and she was grimmer than before. Dorothy was more than ever sure that she would continually clash with this teacher.

"I was looking for something, Miss Olaine," the girl said, stiffly.

"Ask permission when you want to come into the office," snapped the teacher. "And recitation hour is not the time for idling about. What is your class, Miss?"

"I have half an hour with Miss Mingle next. But she isn't ready for me," replied Dorothy.

"Humph! that is an extra. You may skip that to-day and go to your next regular recitation."

"But my music——"

"*I* have charge here, Miss Dale. You and your friends would better understand it. I find the entire first class almost unmanageable. Aren't you due at rhetoric and grammar?"

"If Miss Mingle had not called me—yes," said Dorothy, feeling revolutionary. Miss Olaine certainly was trying!

"Go to your class, then—at once!" commanded the teacher. "And remember that while *I* am in charge of Glenwood School, you girls do not have free access to this office. Ask permission if you wish to consult any book here."

And Dorothy had not found the address she desired! She went out of the room very angry at heart with Miss Olaine. She was so angry, in fact, that she felt just like disobeying her flatly!

That was not like sensible Dorothy. To antagonize the teacher would aid nobody; yet she felt just like doing so.

Instead of mounting the stairs to the classroom in which the present recitation was under way, and from which she had been excused for her music lesson, she ran out of the building altogether and went around to the window of the dressing-room where Tavia was confined.

Tavia must have reached the window by the aid of a stepladder, for it was quite high from the ground. Now the stepladder had been removed, the window was closed, and Dorothy was not at

first sure that her friend was still in durance there.

"Tavia!" she called.

It was not until she had spoken the name twice that Tavia's face appeared at the pane. Then the girl inside opened the window and smiled broadly down upon her chum.

"Is the ogress about?" asked Tavia.

"She's in the office. I just had a flare-up with her," admitted Dorothy.

"Oh, don't you get into trouble over *me*, Doro," begged Tavia. "It isn't worth while."

"What is she going to do with you?"

"Boil me in oil, or some pleasant little pastime like that," chuckled Tavia.

"Do be sensible."

"I can't. I'm lonesome. They've taken away the pigs."

"Oh, dear me, Tavia! That was a dreadful trick. How did you manage it?"

"Hist! cross your heart? Well, Sammy and I did it. But his father mustn't know, for if he does Sammy says he'll get 'lambasted'—whatever *that* may be."

"Well, I'm sorry you're lonesome," Dorothy said. "But Miss Olaine isn't likely to pity you any on that score——"

A window was raised swiftly, and the teacher appeared. She must have been watching Dorothy

from the office, and had come around here to this side of the building particularly to spy upon her.

"So!" she exclaimed. "You flaunt me, do you, Miss Dale? Didn't I tell you to go to your class?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied Dorothy. "And I was going——"

"But you will take your own time about it, eh?" snapped the lady. "You may come in here at once. And tell that other girl to close her window."

Tavia made a dreadful face and slammed down her window. Of course, Miss Olaine could not see the grimace.

"Come in here to me at once," repeated Miss Olaine, and Dorothy obeyed.

The teacher waited for her in the classroom. Dorothy had not felt so disturbed and angry with a teacher since she and Tavia were little girls and had got into trouble with Miss Ellis in the old Dalton public school!

"Now, young lady," snapped Miss Olaine, "you may go into that room and remain with your friend until I choose to release you both. And I hope Mrs. Pangborn will return in season to take the responsibility of your further punishment off my hands."

"Gracious!" exclaimed Tavia, quite loud enough for the teacher to hear, when Dorothy was

rudely thrust into the dressing closet by the shoulders, "she thinks hanging's too good for us, doesn't she, Doro?"

But Dorothy was too angry to reply at first. She felt that the new teacher had gone quite beyond her rights in handling the matter. To push her into the room so!

"Why," thought Dorothy, "she might as well have struck me! And Mrs. Pangborn would not have allowed such a thing. We—we are almost grown up. It is an insult."

But she said nothing like this to Tavia. Besides, Tavia had brought punishment upon her own head in the first place by her practical joke. At the moment, Dorothy could not see that *she* was in anyway at fault. Miss Olaine had just "pounced upon" her, with neither right nor reason on her side!

"And here we are, shut into this little old room," croaked Tavia. "Not even pigs for company."

"Do be quiet, Tavia," begged Dorothy. "You'll have her back—and she'll do something worse to us."

"Here's some books on the shelf," said her friend. "Oh, dear! I wish they were story books. Only old textbooks."

"All right," said Dorothy, more cheefully. "Let's get up lessons for to-morrow."

"That's no fun!" cried Tavia, objecting.

"But it will help to pass away the time. I'm going to do it," said Dorothy, firmly.

"Well—I may as well, too," said Tavia, sighing.

There was a small table and two chairs. They opened the books and sat down to study. The noon luncheon hour came and went and nobody came near the prisoners. Of course, long before this, Tavia had made sure the door was locked.

"Not even bread and water," groaned Tavia. "She means to starve us into subjection, Doro."

"I wish Mrs. Pangborn would come home," said Dorothy Dale.

"We'll be living skeletons before then," groaned her friend.

But when it grew dark Miss Olaine appeared at the door. She brought a tray upon which was a small pitcher of skimmed milk, and two slices of very dry bread.

"Your supper, young ladies—and quite good enough for you," she declared. "Mrs. Pangborn will be at home on the midnight train. I have just received a telegram from her. You shall remain here until she arrives. Then I shall gladly wash my hands of you."

"My goodness! she can wash her hands just as soon as she likes, for all of me," exclaimed Tavia. "A slice of bread and milk! why, I could eat a house, I'm so starved!"

CHAPTER VII

A RAID

DOROTHY found a match on the shelf and lit the gas. It had grown pitch dark outside, and she drew the curtain, too.

"Just as snug as a bug in a rug," quoted Tavia, chuckling. "Only we can't eat the rug, as the bug might, and so reduce our awful appetites. Couldn't you eat a whole ox, Doro?"

"And a minute ago you wanted to eat a house," said Dorothy. "Think of something more appropriate."

"I will. Nice, thin slices of boiled ham between soft white bread—plenty of butter and some mustard—not too much. Pickles—just the very sourest kind. Some chicken salad with fresh lettuce leaves—home-made dressing, no bottled stuff. Stuffed olives. Peanut butter between graham crackers—m-m-m! lovely! celery. And a big piece of frosted cake——"

"Stop!" commanded Dorothy. "Do you want to drive me quite into insurrection?"

"I am already an *insurrecto*," declared Tavia. "And I believe I can get just the sort of banquet I have outlined."

"At some nice hotel—in New York?"

"I know what they were going to have for supper to-night," declared Tavia, and walked over to examine the locked door.

"Dou you mean to say we are going to have *that* kind of a supper?" demanded Dorothy, tragically. "And we under arrest?"

"M-m-m!" said Tavia, thoughtfully. "See here, Doro! Got a hammer?"

"A hammer? Of course! A whole tool chest in my pocket."

"Something to hammer with, then," said Tavia, earnestly. "If I had one I could open this door."

"It's locked."

"Of course it is. But the hinges are on this side."

"Oh! you need a screw-driver!" cried Dorothy, coming over to her.

"Nothing of the kind. I want something to knock out these pins—don't you see? Then we can lift the door off its hinges and pull the bolt out of the lock. Ha!"

"What is it?"

"I've got it!" cried Tavia, under her breath, and immediately dropped down upon the floor and began to take off her shoe.

Quick as it was off, she grasped the shoe by the foot and used the heel to start the pin of the lower hinge. In a moment the steel pin popped out; then Tavia knocked out the one in the upper hinge.

"Now for it, Doro," whispered the bright girl. "Put out the gas, so if anybody should be watching. That's it. Now—take hold and ease off the door. No noise now, my lady!"

The girls managed to pull the door toward them, got a firm hold upon the edge of it, and pried the bolt loose. The door was shoved back against the wall of the room and they could look out into the empty classroom. Light from out of doors—and that very faint—was all that illuminated the larger apartment.

"Oh! if she catches us!" gasped Dorothy.

"Don't you fret. This is a regular hunger strike—just as though we were suffragettes and had been imprisoned. Only we don't refuse to eat; we just refuse *not* to eat," and Tavia giggled as she hastily laced up her shoe again.

"Now, don't you dare be afraid. I'm going on a raid, Doro. Kiss me good-bye, dear. If I never should retur-r-rn—— Blub! blub! My handkerchief isn't big enough to cry into. Lend me yours.

"Farewell, farewell, my own tr-r-rue lo-o-ove! Farewell-er, farewell-er'——

"I go where glory waits me—don't you forget that, Doro. And something to eat, too, better than bread and milk. Hist!"

After this rigamarole, and with the stride of a stage villain, Tavia left the classroom. She did not ask, or expect, Dorothy to take part in the raid on the pantry; indeed, had there been any good in doing so, Dorothy would have advised against the scheme.

Perhaps the girls had a right to a decent supper. At least, Dorothy had done nothing to deserve such harsh treatment from Miss Olaine. So both she and her chum defied the decree of the teacher. They'd actually be starved by midnight, when Mrs. Pangborn was expected to arrive.

If Tavia was caught——

Dorothy went to the corridor door and held it ajar, listening. Sometimes she heard girls' laughter in the upper stories. A teacher passed, but did not see the girl behind the door. Bye and bye there was another stealthy tread.

Miss Olaine? No! It was a girl with her arms full.

"Oh, Tavia!"

"It's me! Lemme in," exclaimed the raider, in a whisper. "Quick, now! We must get that door on its hinges again. And *such* a scrumptious lay-out, Doro! Mm-m-m!"

They did not light the gas. Tavia "unloaded"

upon the table. "Mercy on us! the butter's flatter than a pancake," she breathed. "And the mayonnaise is all over the napkin. But never mind. We can lick it off!" chuckled this reckless bandit.

"Let's get the door back," urged Dorothy.

"Right!" Tavia came to her assistance. They lifted it back into place; only Tavia turned the key which had been left in the lock, and put the key on the inside of the door.

"What for?" demanded the anxious Dorothy.

"We won't run the risk of having the ogress get in and spoil our supper," declared Tavia. "Then—the door goes on easier."

They got it hung in half a minute; then Tavia turned the key in the lock.

"If worse comes to worst," she said, "we'll throw the key out of the window and let her hunt for the person who unlocked our door, gave us the supper, and ran away with the key."

"Oh, Tavia! We'll both get into serious trouble."

"Sufficient unto the day is the trouble thereof," misquoted Tavia. "Now the gas! Let me spread this out. What do you think of this banquet, Doro?"

Dorothy could not refuse her share of the goodies. There was all that Tavia had promised. She seemed to have known to the last item just what the pantry had contained. And she had brought

a bottle of real fizzy sarsaparilla and two glasses.

"Do you think I'd let a person like Miss Olaine get the best of me?" demanded Tavia, with pride.

"Bread and milk, indeed! Well, I guess——"

"Hush!" whispered Dorothy.

There was a firm step in the classroom. They heard it mount the platform and then came a fumbling at the door.

"Oh! she's found us out," breathed Dorothy, seizing Tavia's wrist.

"She's found us *in*, you mean," returned her friend, almost exploding with laughter. "And what more can she expect?"

"Girls!" exclaimed Miss Olaine's harsh voice.

No answer. "Girls!" repeated the teacher. "Miss Dale! Miss Octavia!"

"Yes, ma'am!" drawled Tavia, yawning prodigiously. "Yes, ma'am!"

"You need not tell me you were asleep," snapped the teacher. "Where is the key to this door?"

Tavia had removed the key from the lock and now held it up for Dorothy to see. Then she laid it on the window sill before she answered:

"I'm sure, Miss Olaine, *I* haven't the key. You locked us in——"

"And I left the key in the door, Miss Impertinence," interposed the teacher.

"If the key was on the outside and we are on

the inside," said Tavia, calmly, "of course you do not accuse us of appropriating it, Miss Olaine?"

"Somebody has been here, Miss. I demand to know who it was."

"I can tell you truthfully, Miss Olaine," said Tavia, still calmly, "that *I* have seen nobody at the door."

"Miss Dale, where is the key?"

Like a flash Tavia opened the lower sash and threw the key out into the darkness. She pointed to Dorothy and mouthed the words she was to say—and they were perfectly truthful:

"Say you don't know where!" commanded Tavia, in this silent way.

"Miss Dale!" exclaimed the teacher again. "Do you know where the key is?"

"No."

"Is that all you can say, Miss?"

"We have not got it—of *that* I am sure," declared Dorothy.

Tavia had calmly gone back to her salad and peanut butter sandwiches. Her mouth was so full when Miss Olaine spoke to her again that she could hardly answer.

"Miss Octavia Travers! Who removed the key from this lock? You know who it was."

"I'm—I'm——"

"What is the matter with you? Your mouth

is full. You are eating, Miss. Where did you get the food? Who has been here and supplied you with more than I gave you at supper time?"

"There hasn't been a soul at that door except yourself," declared Tavia, exactly, "as far as I know."

"You are not telling the truth, Miss!" declared the teacher, warmly.

Mrs. Pangborn's system of conducting Glenwood Hall did not include doubting the word of her pupils. The girls were put on their honor from the hour they first entered the school, and seldom had the principal been taken advantage of.

Dorothy and Tavia looked at each other. Both were flushed and all the laughter had gone out of Tavia's brown eyes.

"Why, how horrid!" she gasped.

"What is that, Miss?" demanded the angry teacher outside.

And then Dorothy spoke up. "We refuse to discuss the matter with you any further, Miss Olaine—until Mrs. Pangborn arrives. In *this* school the girls are not accused of falsehoods."

Miss Olaine was silent a moment. Then they heard her walk heavily away from the locked door.

CHAPTER VIII

CONDITIONS

"Two of the girls shut up in the little dressing-room? And the key missing? Suppose there should be a fire, Miss Olaine?"

Mrs. Pangborn had just arrived. She had not even removed her bonnet, only untied its strings. And she sat with her feet on the fender of the open fire place where the gaslog burned in the office. It was a half hour after midnight and Glenwood Hall was supposed to be as silent as the tomb at that time.

"I thought of that. It is a trick," said the dark teacher, hastily, and wringing her hands together in the peculiar way she had. It showed that Miss Olaine was a very nervous person.

"How do you mean—a trick?" asked the principal, quietly.

"Some person in league with the two girls removed the key, of course. I am sure it was done so as to keep me out while they ate forbidden food."

"But did they not have their supper?"

"Bread and milk; quite enough for them."

"And for luncheon? You say they were shut into the room in the forenoon."

"I—I thought it would bring them to terms quicker. A little fast surely would not hurt them," said Miss Olaine, hesitatingly.

"Perhaps not," agreed Mrs. Pangborn, after a moment of silence, but looking at her new assistant in rather a curious way. "However, I do not approve of corporal punishment——"

"Corporal punishment!"

"Yes. Underfeeding must come under that head," said Mrs. Pangborn, but with a laugh. "And you think they somehow tricked you and got more supper than you intended?"

"I am positive. I have been to the pantry. That door should be locked——"

"Oh, no!" cried the principal. "I never lock things away from my girls."

"A mistake, Mrs. Pangborn," declared the assistant, with growing confidence. "Youth is naturally treacherous."

"Oh, my dear Miss Olaine!" exclaimed the principal of Glenwood. "I am sorry your experience has led to that belief. Mine has not—and it has the advantage of yours in extent of time," and she smiled again.

"I am sure, Miss Olaine, you and I are going

to get on beautifully; but you do not understand my girls."

"I understand both of these I have shut up——"

"Thank goodness there is a master-key to all the doors right here on my ring," interrupted Mrs. Pangborn, shaking the jingling bunch of keys. "In a moment—as soon as my feet are warm—we will go and let those poor girls out and send them to bed."

"Mrs. Pangborn! you evidently do not consider the serious nature of the offense," cried Miss Olaine, again wringing her bony hands, her eyes flashing.

"No. True. I did not ask you. What happened?"

Miss Olaine told her story—all about the pigs, and her fright, and Dorothy being disobedient, and defying her, as Miss Olaine said. But she neglected to call either culprit by name.

"I did not expect insurrection to begin so quickly, Miss Olaine," said the principal, gravely. "And I gather from your statement that two of my girls—— They belong to the upper class, you say?"

"Yes, Mrs. Pangborn. Young ladies old enough——"

"And their names?"

"Misses Travers and Dale."

"Tavia Travers!" gasped the older lady. "Of course! Who else would have invented such a perfectly ridiculous thing as introducing pigs into the school room?"

"I knew you would be amazed, madam."

"Not at all," the principal hastened to say. "Nothing Tavia ever does surprises me. But the other—not Dorothy Dale?"

"Yes, Miss Dale."

"Oh, Miss Olaine! there must be some mistake there. I know Dorothy so well," said Mrs. Pangborn, gravely. "The two are always together; but I am sure that whatever Dorothy told you was true. And Tavia, too, for that matter."

"I am positive they were endeavoring to mislead me. And they would not tell who had helped them, or who else was in the plot to put those pigs in this house——"

"Miss Olaine!" gasped Mrs. Pangborn, suddenly. "That is something I forgot to speak of when I went away in such a hurry the day after you came to Glenwood."

"What is that?" asked the surprised assistant.

"I never ask one of my girls to tell on another. They are all on honor, here. I do not expect any girl to play the spy. Indeed, I punish severely only those who show such a tendency. You were wrong to expect either of those girls to give any information which might lead to trouble for their

schoolmates. Whereas, if they say nobody else was aware of the prank——”

“Miss Travers refuses to admit that she had any help at all.”

“If she says it is her own performance, you may believe it is so.”

“Oh, I do not believe in giving such latitude to mere school girls,” declared Miss Olaine, and now she was quite heated again.

Mrs. Pangborn looked at her seriously. “You have much to learn yet, I fear, Miss Olaine,” she said, quietly. “Reports of your erudition and management of studies in a great public school urged me to engage you as my assistant; but you must be guided by me in the management of my girls—that is sure.

“You might have known that shutting a girl like Tavia Travers into that little room would be no real punishment. She would merely put on her thinking cap and endeavor to bring about something that would make you look the more ridiculous.”

“Mrs. Pangborn!”

“Yes. And she has succeeded in doing so; hasn’t she?”

“How would you have had me punish her?” demanded Miss Olaine, reddening under the principal’s rather stern eye.

“Oh, that is another matter!” and the older

woman laughed. "A punishment to fit the crime is rather difficult to invent in Tavia's case. I believe I should have demanded from her an exhaustive composition upon swine, from the earliest mention of the beast in history, down through all the ages to and including the packing-house age. I would have made Tavia industrious, and perhaps taught her something.

"As for Dorothy—— Well, you have quite mistaken her character, Miss Olaine. She is the soul of truth, and while she may have been loyal to her friend, that should not be considered a crime; should it?

"Let us go now and interview the culprits. And, if you agree, I think they have both had punishment enough. Suppose you tell them to go to their room and that they will not be expected to appear at prayers or breakfast to-morrow morning. I do not approve of my girls losing their beauty sleep."

And *that* is why Dorothy and Tavia got out of their difficulty so easily. They didn't understand it—just then. But Dorothy suspected and she knew that Mrs. Pangborn was far too wise to give them an opportunity to openly face Miss Olaine and have judgment rendered accordingly.

"But I dislike her just the same," whispered Dorothy.

"Of course we do! And she'll try to catch us again——"

"Then behave, Tavia. The whole trouble started with your trying to plague her," declared her friend.

"Well! I—like—that," murmured Tavia in a tone that showed she did *not* like it, at all. "Just you wait, Doro. We haven't heard the last of this. Old Olaine will just be waiting for half a chance to pounce on us again."

Dorothy did not get at what she was looking for in the directory until the afternoon of the next day. Then she was very careful to ask permission to go to the office for reference.

She found the name and address of the secretary of the bridge builders' union, and she wrote that afternoon asking about Tom Moran. She explained just why she wanted to learn about him, and his whereabouts, and tried to put before the person she wrote to the pitiful history of Celia Moran in a way that might engage his interest.

Dorothy had told nobody about Celia—not even Tavia. Of course her chum would have been interested in the child from the "Findling" and her lost brother. But just now—at the beginning of the term—there really was so much going on at Glenwood that aside from the hours that they spent in their imprisonment, the two friends had very little time to talk together.

This last half-year at Glenwood was bound to be a very busy one. Some studies in which Dorothy was proficient Tavia did not stand so well in, and *vice versa*. They had to study very hard, and when Tavia "broke out" as she was bound to do every little while, it seemed absolutely necessary that she "let off steam."

Mrs. Pangborn understood, and so did the older teachers. But Miss Olaine was naturally a martinet, and she was very nervous and irritable in the bargain. She could not overlook the least exuberance of schoolgirl enthusiasm.

So, inside of a week, Tavia was "conditioned." Each black mark that she had against her in deportment had to be "worked off" before the end of the half, or she could not graduate.

And in seeking to shield her chum again from the consequences of her folly, Dorothy found herself conditioned, too. Mrs. Pangborn demanded her presence in the office, and for almost the first time in her career at Glenwood, Dorothy Dale found herself at odds with the kind principal of the school.

"I am sure I have been here long enough for you to know me quite well, Mrs. Pangborn," she said, with some heat, to the good lady who loved her. "Have I changed so much, do you think? Nobody else reports me but Miss Olaine——"

"You are changing every day, my dear. We

all are," said the principal, firmly. "But I do not believe your *heart* has changed, Dorothy Dale. Unfortunately Miss Olaine's manner made all you older girls dislike her at the start. But have you stopped to think that perhaps there is something in her life—some trouble, perhaps—that makes her nervous and excitable?"

"Well—but—we——"

"You have never before been uncharitable," smiled Mrs. Pangborn. "Try and bear patiently with Miss Olaine. If you knew all about her you would pity her condition, I am sure. No! I cannot tell you. It is not my secret, my dear. But try to understand her better—and do, Dorothy, keep Tavia within bounds!"

The principal knew that this line of pleading would win over Dorothy Dale every time!

CHAPTER IX

AN EXPEDITION AFOOT

"YES," said Miss Olaine, who became deeply interested when she thought she had the attention of her class, and the matter under discussion was one that appealed particularly to herself. "What we want in literature is direct and simple English.

"I wish you young ladies to mark this: Epigrams, or flowers of rhetoric, or so-called 'fine writing,' does not mark scholarship. The better understanding one has of words and their meanings, the more simply thought may be expressed.

"Do you attend me?" she added, sharply, staring straight at Tavia. "Then to-morrow each of you bring me, expressed in her own language upon paper, her consideration of what simple English means."

And Tavia received another "condition" for presenting and reading aloud to the class, as requested, the following:

"Those conglomerated effusions of vapid intellects, which posed in lamented attitudes as the emotional and intellectual ingredients of fictional real-

ism, fall far short of the obvious requirements of contemporary demands and violate the traditional models of the transcendent minds of the Elizabethan era of glorious memory."

"You consider yourself very smart, I have no doubt, Miss Travers," said Miss Olaine, sneeringly, "in inventing a specimen of so-called English exactly opposed to the simple language I demanded. You evidently consider that you have been sent here to school to *play*. We will see what a little extra *work* will do for you."

And so Tavia had certain tasks to perform that kept her indoors on the next Saturday half-holiday. That is why Dorothy chanced to set out alone from the school for a long walk.

It was a cold afternoon, and the sun was hidden. There seemed to be a haze over the whole sky. But there was no snow on the ground, and the latter was as hard as iron and rang under her feet.

Jack Frost had fettered the ponds and streams and frozen the earth, in preparation for the snow that was coming. But Dorothy, not being very weatherwise, did not guess what the atmospheric conditions foretold.

It seemed to her to be a very delightful day for walking, for there was no rough wind, and the paths were so hard. She was only sorry that Tavia was not with her.

It was the apparent peacefulness of the day that tempted her off the highroad into a piece of wood with which she was not very familiar. Indeed, she would better have turned back toward the school at the time she entered the wood, for she had then come a long way.

The path she finally struck into was narrow and winding, and the trees loomed thickly on either hand. Before she realized her position, it was growing dusk and fine snow was sifting down upon her—from the thick branches of the trees, she thought at first.

"But no! that can't be," urged Dorothy, suddenly, and aloud. "There hasn't been any snow for a week, and surely that which fell last would not have lain upon the branches so long. I declare! it's a storm started. I must get back to Glenwood."

She turned square around—she was positive she did so—and supposedly took the back track. But there were intersecting paths, and all she could see of the sky overhead was a gray blotch of cloud, out of which the snow sifted faster and faster. She had no idea of the points of the compass.

She went on, and on. "I really must get out of this and reach the road," Dorothy told herself. "Otherwise I shall be drifting about the woods all night—and it's altogether too cold to even contemplate *that* as a possibility."

Being cheerful, however, did not culminate in Dorothy's finding the end of the path at once. And when she did so—coming suddenly out into an open place which she did not recognize—the fine snow was driving down so fast that it almost blinded her.

"This is not the road," thought the girl, with the first shiver of fear that she had felt. "I have got turned about. I shall have to ask——"

Whom? Through the snow she could see no house—no building of any kind. She stood and listened for several moments, straining her ears to catch the faintest sound above the swish of the driving snow.

There was no other sound. The wind seemed to be rising, and the snow had already gathered to the depth of several inches while she had been rambling in the woods.

"Really," thought Dorothy. "I never saw snow gather so fast before."

She had little trouble at first following the path on the edge of the wood. She knew very well it was not the highway; but it must lead somewhere—and to *somewhere* she must very quickly make her way!

"If I don't want to be snowed under completely—be a regular lost 'babe in the wood'—I must arrive at some place very soon!" was her decision.

The path was a cart track. There was a half-

covered worm-fence on one hand and the edge of the wood on the other. She had no idea whether she was traveling in the direction of Glenwood Hall, or exactly the opposite way.

"Swish! swish! swish!" hissed the snow. It had a sort of soothing sound; but the fact that she was lost in it was not a soothing idea at all to Dorothy.

She staggered on, stumbling in the frozen path, and realizing very keenly that the snow was gathering no faster than the cold was increasing. With the dropping of night the temperature was sliding downward with great rapidity.

Dorothy Dale was in real peril. The driving snow blinded her; she lost the line of the fence finally, and knew that she was staggering through an open field. She was still in the winding cart-path, for she fell into and out of the ruts continually; but she was traveling across an open farm. The sheltering wood was behind her and the snow drove down upon her, harder than before.

She halted, her back to the increasing wind, and tried to peer ahead. A wall of drifting snow limited the view. She raised her voice and shouted—again and again!

There came no reply. Not even a dog barked. She seemed alone in a world of drifting snow, and now she was really terrified.

She was benumbed by the cold and it would be

impossible for her to travel much farther. If she did not reach some refuge soon——

Dorothy plunged on into the storm, scrambling over the rough path, and occasionally raising her voice in cries for help. But she was so breathless and spent that she traveled slowly.

Here was a fence corner. The way was open into a narrow lane. Several huge oak trees in a row bulked big before her as she pressed on. She could not remember ever having seen the spot before.

But Dorothy believed a house must be near. Surely she would not be lost—covered up by the snow and frozen to death—near to a human habitation?

“There must be somebody living around here!” she murmured, plowing on through the drifts. “Help; help!”

Her faint cry brought no response. She was becoming confused as well as weary. The wind increased in force so rapidly that when she again halted and leaned back against it, it seemed to the weakened girl as though she were lying in somebody’s arms!

The snow swept around her like a mantle. It gathered deeply at her feet. She no longer felt the keen air, but was sinking into a pleasant lethargy.

There was peril in this, and at another time Dorothy would have understood it fully. But

she was not now in a state to understand what threatened her. She was only drowsy—weak—almost insensible. Another moment and she would have fallen in the snow and sunk into that sleep from which there would be no awakening.

And then, to her dim eyes, appeared a sudden glow of lamplight ahead. It could not be far away, for she heard the hinges of a door creak, and then a voice reached her ears:

"Come in here! What are you doing out in that snow—ye good-for-nothin'? Ain't ye got no sinse, I wanter know? Av all the young 'uns that iver was bawn, it's you is the wust av th' lot. Come in here!"

Dorothy was aroused by these words. For a moment she thought the woman who spoke must be addressing her. Then she heard a thin little voice answer:

"Oh, Mrs. Hogan! I *know* I heard somebody hollerin' in the snow. It's somebody what's lost, Mrs. Hogan."

"Nonsinse! Come away, now—I'll have no more av yer foolin', Cely Moran. I'll sind ye ter bed widout yer supper if ye don't come in out o' that snow——"

Dorothy hardly understood yet; but almost involuntarily she raised her voice in a cry of:

"Celia! Celia Moran!"



SHE STAGGERED FORWARD INTO THE DIM RADIANCE OF THE LIGHT.
Dorothy Dale's Promise.

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"Do you hear that, Mrs. Hogan?" shrieked the shrill voice of the child.

"Bless us an' save us!" gasped the woman. "The saints preserve us! 'Tis a ghost, it is."

"What's a ghost, Mrs. Hogan?" demanded the inquisitive Celia, quick to seize upon a new word.

"'Tis a Pixie. Who knows yer name in this place? Come away, child!"

Dorothy, who heard them plainly now, cried out again. She staggered forward into the dim radiance of the light that shone from the farmhouse kitchen.

"There she is!" Dorothy heard the little one say. Then she plunged forward to her knees. Mrs. Ann Hogan, the grenadier, came flying out of the doorway and gathered Dorothy right up in her strong arms.

"Git out from under fut, ye nuisance!" she commanded, speaking to Celia. "Av coorse 'tis somebody in trouble. Make way, there! Lemme near the stove wid her.

"Sure, 'tis a most be-uchiful young leddy as ever was. An' she was lost in the snow—thru for yez! Sure her folks will be payin' well for her bein' saved from death this night.

"Shut the door, Cely. Put on the kettle—she must have somethin' hot. Stir yer stumps, Cely Moran, or I'll be the death of ye!"

CHAPTER X

AT THE CASTLE OF THE OGRESS

THERE was a buzzing in Dorothy's ears; it seemed as though she could not be herself, but must be somebody else. "Herself" was still out in that dreadful snowstorm—sinking to a fatal sleep in the soft drifts.

Yet all the time she heard—distantly, but sufficiently distinct—the clatter of Mrs. Ann Hogan's tongue, and the gasping, interrupted speech of little Celia Moran. At first Dorothy thought her rescue must be a dream.

"Take off her shoes—do ye hear me, ye little nuisance?" commanded the big woman. "Sure, 'tis jest about done for, she is. Cely! Cely Moran! did ye bring the eggs as I told ye?"

"Oh, dear, me, Mrs. Hogan," said the little girl. "I was *that* scared——"

"Thim eggs!" exclaimed the woman. "Where be they?"

"I dropped the basket when I heard the lady holler——"

"Go for thim! They'll be froze in another minnit—an' eggs fawty-two cints th' dozen at the store! Mind, now! if ye've broke thim, I'll wallop ye."

Dorothy knew that the door was opened again, for a blast of cold wind came in. But she could not open her eyes. The lids were too heavy. Mrs. Hogan was rubbing her hands between her own—which were as rough as nutmeg graters!

"Here ye are," declared the woman, still kneeling before the settee on which she had laid Dorothy. She spoke to the child. "Are they broke, I ax ye?"

"No, ma'am! No, ma'am, Mrs. Hogan," stutted Celia's shrill little voice. "Oh, I didn't break none; but the hulls come off two or three——"

"Little nuisance!" snapped the woman. "And ye'd lie about it, too. Put 'em careful on the shelf—or I'll be the death of ye! Lit another egg be broken——"

The unfinished threat seemed to fill the child with terror. Dorothy heard her sobbing softly. Then she crept to Dorothy's feet again and continued to unlace the bigger girl's shoes. When they were drawn off Mrs. Hogan began to rub the girl's feet. They were so cold and stiff that it seemed to Dorothy as though they would be broken right off in the woman's hard hands.

She forced her eyes open, and saw the big woman on her knees. Celia's wondering little face was close to her own. Dorothy sat up with sudden energy.

"Oh! oh! oh!" whispered Celia. "It is my dear, dear young lady!"

"Why, Celia——"

"Is it knowin' aich other ye bes?" demanded Mrs. Hogan, suspiciously. Dorothy was half afraid of this muscular Amazon. She thought it best to tell the whole truth.

"I saw Celia in the Belding station the day you brought her home from the city foundling asylum, Mrs. Hogan," she said, simply.

"Arrah! the little baggage!" grumbled the woman. "An' she niver said a wor-r-rd about it—bad 'cess to her!"

"I expect she was afraid you would not like it," observed Dorothy, quietly. "It was not Celia's fault. I spoke to her myself. No, Mrs. Hogan! never mind rubbing my feet any more. Thank you. They will be quite warm in a minute."

Somehow she did not want the great, coarse woman to touch her.

"Well, now," said Mrs. Hogan, rising to her feet, and standing with her hands on her hips and her arms akimbo, "well, now, will ye be tellin' me where ye come from, young leddy?"

"From Glenwood Hall school. I am Dorothy Dale."

"Indade! And do they know where ye be?"

"Why, I didn't know myself where I was until I heard Celia's voice," declared Dorothy. "She told me she was going to live with you. But—but I don't really know the situation of this farm, Mrs. Hogan. You see, I got lost in the woods, and in the storm. It came on to snow so fast and so suddenly."

"Yis—I see," grunted Mrs. Hogan. "I kin tell ye how far ye air from the highway. 'Tis eight mile, if it's a step."

"Oh, dear! I must have been wandering farther and farther away from the highway all the time."

"Thru for ye! Well, ye want to retur-r-rn, I make no doubt—as soon as ye can?"

"Yes, indeed," said the girl, quickly. "I am getting nice and warm. It was silly of me to almost lose consciousness——"

"In a short time ye'd been dead in the snow," declared the woman, bluntly. "And ye can thank yer stars I found ye. Yis, indeed. Yer friends will doubtless thank me, too," and she spoke grimly.

Dorothy was remembering more clearly now. She had heard the woman say something about being paid for taking care of her—she could easily

believe that Mrs. Hogan would do no kindness save through a mercenary motive.

"Do you suppose I can get back to school to-night, Mrs. Hogan?" she asked, rather timidly.

"And in this stor-r-um, is it?"

"But Mrs. Pangborn will be worried."

"Who's she—the head teacher, is it? Well! Now, do yez think yez could find yer way alone, Miss?"

"Oh, I am afraid not," admitted Dorothy, looking at the snow banking against the windows of the farmhouse kitchen.

"Nor ye couldn't walk it, not even if I went with ye?"

"Oh, Mrs. Hogan! You wouldn't attempt such a thing?"

The grenadier shook herself. She was more than six feet tall, and her shoulders were wide and her arms long. She was really a giantess.

"Sure, I've tackled har-r-rder jobs," she said.

"But mebbe I kin get Jim Bentley to put the hosses t' th' pung. But ye'll pay for thim?"

"I'd gladly pay what you ask——"

"Tin dollars, then," said the woman, quickly.

"'Tis wuth it, to take ye home through the snow this night."

"I—I'll pay it, Mrs. Hogan," said Dorothy, faintly. "At least, Mrs. Pangborn will pay it. I haven't the money."

"Well! I'll see Jim—Is he out to the stables, Cely?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied the child, who had been gazing at Dorothy all this time with wide open eyes. "But one of the hosses is down, ma'am."

"What's that? What's that ye tell me?" exclaimed the woman, turning on Celia, angrily. "Down in the stall, ye mane?"

"Yes, ma'am. I saw it. And Mr. Bentley, he was sayin' nawful things about it——"

"Sayin' *what*?" demanded Mrs. Hogan.

"He was swearin' jes' awful," pursued the little girl, in an awed whisper.

"Swearin'; was he? What do ye know about swearin', plague o' me life?" said the woman. "Till me what he said?"

"Oh, Mrs. Hogan! I couldn't," gasped Celia, shaking her head. "It—it's wicked to swear."

"You tell me——"

"I couldn't," repeated Celia. "But you say over all of the very baddest cuss words you know, Mrs. Hogan, and I'll tell you when you come to 'em—jes' what Mr. Bentley said."

Dorothy suddenly wanted to laugh, although she was half frightened still of the ogress. Mrs. Hogan raised her hand as though to box the little girl's ears; but then she thought better of it.

"Can ye bate that, Miss?" she demanded of Dorothy. "'Tis allus the way. The young 'un is

as smart as a steel trap. 'Tis the way ~~she~~ be allus gittin' the best of me.

"Well, now! 'tis not to the school ye'll get this night, then. Ye can see that?"

"Oh, Mrs. Hogan!"

"And the stor-r-um is bad, too. Aven with two hosses we might not win through aisy. And with only wan—Arrah! ye'll haf ter stay the night out, Miss. I s'pose ye'll willin'ly pay for it?"

"I am sure, Mrs. Hogan," Dorothy said, "you will lose nothing by giving me shelter."

"I dunno. Rich folks ain't as lib'ral as they might be. And ye'd never cra'led—not on yer han's an' knees—to the next neighbor. Mind that, now!"

"I am quite sure," said Dorothy, humbly, "that I should have fallen in the snow had not your house been near."

"Well! I'll make ye somehow comferble. Till marnin' anyhow. Thin we'll see. If it kapes on snowin' like this, though, Miss, 'twill be a blizzard an' no knowin' when ye'll git back to that school."

"If only Mrs. Pangborn—and Tavia—and all the others—won't be scared about me," murmured Dorothy.

"They'll be sure ye warn't fule enough to go on, and on, when it began ter snow so," grunted the woman. "'Tis lucky our frinds think better av our sinse than we deserve. They'll be sure ye wint

into some house when it began to storm so hard, me gur-r-rl."

Meanwhile Dorothy had removed her hat and coat and Mrs. Hogan hung them to dry behind the big cookstove which set well out from the chimney-piece. She advised her guest to sit up to the stove and dry the bottom of her skirt, while she herself got into a man's storm-coat and gloves, lit a lantern, and sallied forth, as she said, "to see what that ormadoun, Jim Bentley, was doing to the hoss."

The moment she was gone Celia ran into Dorothy's open arms. The child clung around the neck of Dorothy, and whispered:

"Don't you be afraid, lady. She won't hurt you."

"Does she hurt you, Celia?" demanded the older girl. "Does she whip you?"

"Oh, no! Not unless I'm real *bad*. But—but she doesn't like little girls—not a little, teeny bit. I—I wisht I lived with somebody that liked little girls, lady."

"Don't call me that, dear," said Dorothy, hastily, and wiping away her tears. The little one was dry-eyed as she had been that day in the railroad station. "My name is Dorothy—Dorothy Dale. Can you remember that?"

"Oh, yes! It's so pretty," said Celia, smiling

up at her wistfully. "And please, can I ask you a question, Dorothy Dale—please?"

"All you want to, dear," cried her friend.

"Oh!" cried Celia, clasping her little, clawlike hands, "have you found Tom Moran yet? Have you found my brother?"

CHAPTER XI

SNOWBOUND

THE earnestness in the little, shrewd face, the quaver of her voice, the clutch of her fingers around Dorothy's neck, all impressed the girl from Glenwood Hall as to just how much the finding of the big, lost brother meant to little Celia Moran.

"I haven't found him yet, dear," she said, brokenly. "But I will—I *will*—find him. I have written a letter, and I am going to keep on searching—Oh, my dear! I *know* I shall find him for you in the end. Just you have patience."

"That's what the matron used to say at the Findling," said Celia. "But, do you know patience is a awful hard thing to keep?"

"I expect it is, dear."

"And you'll be sure to find the *right* Tom Moran," urged the little girl. "You know, he's big, and he's got ever so red hair, and he builds bridges and things."

"I shall find the right one," promised Dorothy.

"You see, Mrs. Hogan don't want me to talk about him," said the child, faintly. "When I forgets and does, she says: 'Drat the young 'un! Ain't she thankful for havin' a home?'"

"But, do you know," pursued Celia, her voice dropping to a whisper again, "I'se afraid I ain't as thankful as I doughter be—no, I ain't."

"Not thankful?"

"No, ma'am! I can't somehow jes' feel thankful for Mrs. Ann Hogan."

Dorothy could not blame her for this, but she did not feel it right to agree with her. "Oh, my dear! I expect Mrs. Hogan is kind to you—in her way," she said.

"Yes, I 'spect so," sighed Celia, nodding slowly. "But you can't jes' get uster some folkses' ways; can you? It—it was better in the Findling—yes, it was, Dorothy. And I hoped if any lady took me away it would be a nice, cuddly one."

"A cuddly one?" repeated Dorothy. "What sort of a lady is that?"

"Why, you know," Celia said, with eagerness. "The kind that cuddles you, and makes a-much over you. Of course, you never was a Findling, Dorothy?"

"Oh, no, dear! I haven't any mother, any more than you have; but I have a dear, dear father and two brothers——"

"Well, you see," interrupted the eager little

one, "some of the ladies what come for the findlings just fall right in love with them. The matron lady always dresses 'em up real pretty, and curls their hair, and makes 'em look as pretty as they can look."

"You see," she added, in an explanatory way, "I was so nawful thin—scrawny, the matron said—the mother-ladies what comed to find a findling didn't care much for me."

Dorothy could understand that it was the pretty, plump children who would mostly attract those lonely hearts reaching out for the babies that God had denied them.

"You see," pursued Celia, "Mrs. Hogan wanted a young one that could *work*. She told the matron so. I was gettin' so big that they had to let somebody have me pretty soon, or I'd have to go to the Girls' School—an' the matron said 'God forbid!' so I guess the Girls' School ain't a very nice place for little girls to go," and Celia shook her head wisely.

"But, you see, I hoped an' hoped that one of the cuddly ladies would take me. I seen one carry Maisie—she was my little friend—right out of the Findling, and down the steps, and into a great, big, be-youtiful ortermobile. She hugged her tight all the way, too, an' I *think*—she cried over her. The matron said she'd lost a little girl that looked like Maisie.

"But I didn't look like nobody that was lost—not at all. They all said when they looked at me: 'She's jes' the cutest little thing!' But somehow they didn't love me."

"Oh, my dear!" cried Dorothy, gathering Celia into her arms again. "I don't see why all the lonesome mothers that came there to the asylum didn't fall in love with you right away!"

There was a great stamping upon the porch and the door flew open. Dorothy saw that the whole world outside seemed to be one vast snowbank. Mrs. Hogan, puffing and blowing, in knee boots and her man's outfit, was covered with snow.

"That Jim Bentley's gone home—bad 'cess t' him. Though 'tis me saves a supper thereby. An' he niver got the hoss up at all, at all!" she cried, wiping her red face on a towel hanging by the sink, and then shedding her outside garments, boots and all, in a heap by the hot stove.

"'Tis an awful night out," she pursued. "'Tis lucky ye came here as ye did, Miss. We're safe and sound, the saints be praised! An' I got the ould hoss on his feet, mesilf, an' no thanks to that lazy spalpane, Jim Bentley. The Lord is good to the poor Irish."

Dorothy decided that the man, Jim Bentley, must be a neighbor whom Mrs. Hogan hired to do some of her heavy work. But the Amazon

seemed quite capable of doing a good deal of farm work herself.

Now she set about getting supper, and she kept Celia Moran hopping to run her errands, fetch and carry, and otherwise aid in the preparation the meal. It was no banquet; merely hot bread and fried pork, with some preserves, the latter evidently opened for the delectation of the "paying guest."

Mrs. Hogan made it plain at every turn that she expected to be paid for everything she did for Dorothy. She was a veritable female miser. Dorothy had never imagined such a person in all her life before.

And, although the woman did not really put her hand upon little Celia, she was continually threatening her and hustling her about. She seemed even to begrudge the poor child her food, and the infinitesimal portion of preserve that was put upon Celia's plate was, to Dorothy's mind, "the last straw."

The school girl boldly changed saucers with Celia and gave the little one *her* share of the sweetmeat.

Mrs. Hogan would not let her guest assist in clearing up after supper. Celia, in a long apron tied around her throat by its strings, and dragging on the floor so that her little feet in their worn shoes were impeded when she tried to walk, stood

upon a box at the kitchen sink and washed the pile of dishes, while her mistress dried them—scolding and admonishing all the time.

“Av all the young imps of Satan! looker that now! D'ye not know tis wrong ter wash the greasy dishes first? How often must I tell ye? An' her water's not hot.

“That's it! pour in some more. 'Tis too hot for ye? 'Twill cool. An' yer han's no bether nor mine, an' w'en I was your age I washed dishes for a boardin' house—twinty hear-r-rtty men sat doon to the table, too. And they made a wash-basket o' dishes iv'ry male, so they did!

“What's the mather with yer han's? Is ut a cute lady ye expict ter be? Ha! ye'll l'arn some practical things, then, while yer wid me. Arrah! there's a plate that ain't clane. What d'ye mane by ut? 'Tis a good lickin' ye oughter have!”

And thus she went on, all during the task. Poor Celia was not struck, or really abused, as far as Dorothy could see. But she was sensitive, and the lashing of Mrs. Hogan's coarse tongue hurt Celia more than physical punishment would have hurt some other child.

When the smoke of battle had passed away, and little Celia had washed out and hung up the dish-towels to dry on the line behind the stove, Dorothy took her on the settee beside her. Mrs. Ho-

gan made no objection, nor did she scarcely speak to them as the evening advanced.

Dorothy whispered stories to the round-eyed child—Oh! she had had plenty of practise in story-telling while her brothers, Joe and Roger, were little. Celia was too old to care much for “The Little Rid Hin”, or “The Frog He Would A-Wooing Go”; but Dorothy could repeat “Aspinax; or, the Enchanted Dwarf” almost word for word, and the marvellous adventures of that appealing hero held Celia’s enthralled attention for the evening.

Perhaps Mrs. Hogan had been listening, too; for she never said a word about its being bedtime until the story was finished. All the time the snow had been beating against the house, while the wind moaned in the chimney and occasionally rattled a loose shutter.

It was really an awful night out, and Dorothy felt that she was being snowbound here in this lonely farmhouse. She was only afraid that Tavia and the other girls, as well as Mrs. Pangborn, would be frightened for her.

“I’ll be puttin’ youse in the spare room. ’Tis a betther bed than those above stairs,” said Mrs. Hogan. “I suppose ye’ll be willin’ to pay a mite extry for th’ accommdation? There’s a stove and a fire laid ready to light. Ye kin undress where ’tis war-r-m, and I’ll heat the sheets for ye. In the

marnin' I'll sind Celia down airly, an' she kin light the fire for ye, Miss Dale. 'Tis goin' to be a cold night, an' we may be snowed ter th' eaves by marnin'."

"Oh! I hope not," replied Dorothy, warmly.

"Ye nade have no fear. There's plenty of fuel and atein', I'd have ye know."

"But are you going to let me sleep down here all alone?" queried Dorothy.

"Sure, the upstairs rooms are not fit for the likes o' ye," said the woman, quickly. "And there's no manes of heatin' them. In the marnin' ye'll have a nice, hot fire to git up by. I'll see that Cely lights it——"

"Oh, Mrs. Hogan!" cried Dorothy, "let Celia sleep down here with me. Your bed is big enough for two, surely."

"Well, I dunno——"

"Then she will be right on hand to light the fire in the morning," suggested Dorothy, who could not think calmly of the little girl getting up in the cold to come downstairs and light a fire for *her*. "And I'd love to have her sleep with me. She'd be company."

"Well, if ye wish it," said the woman, slowly. "But mind ye, Cely! if ye're not a good gur-rl— an' kick an' thrash in yer sleep—I'll certainly spank ye. Now, mind that!"

The woman got up and went through the hall

to open the guest chamber. The room was like a refrigerator, and the cold air swept out of it into the kitchen and made Dorothy and Celia "hug the stove." It was a bitter cold night and Dorothy secretly longed for her own warm room, with Tavia, at Glenwood Hall.

But Celia was delighted at the permission given her. She wriggled out of Dorothy's arms and ran upstairs for her nightie. Mrs. Hogan brought forth one of her own sleeping garments for Dorothy—voluminous enough, it seemed to the girl, to be used as a tent if one wished to go camping out.

The nightgown was of coarse muslin, but as white as it could be, and had evidently been folded away in lavender for some special occasion. Mrs. Hogan did not give one the impression of being a lady who paid much attention to the niceties of life.

And there was Celia's little nightie—a coarse, unbleached cotton garment, with not even a frill of common lace about the throat. When the child got into it and knelt by the kitchen settee to say her prayers, Dorothy thought she looked as though she was dressed in a little meal-sack!

Meanwhile Mrs. Hogan had brought down an old-fashioned brass "bed warmer" from the wall—a long handle, covered pan (the cover being perforated) into which she shoveled some glowing

coals from the stove fire-box. With this bed-warmer she ironed the bed in the guest room. These bed-warmers were common enough in the pioneer homes of New England and the upper New York counties, and Dorothy decided that Mrs. Hogan must have found this one in the old farmhouse when she had purchased the place.

"Come on wid ye, now!" the woman called from the cold bed chamber. "Oi've taken the desp'rit cold out o' the shates, and' yez kin cuddle in here an' kape war-r-m. But ye'll git no sich notion in yer head that I'll be warmin' yer bid for yez on other nights, Cely; for I won't do ut! I never have me own bed warmed, and it's well fer youse ter l'arn ter live harsh, too."

This was her good-night to them. When the two girls had scrambled into bed, all of a shiver from crossing the cold hall and the big chamber, Mrs. Hogan banged the door, and the next moment they heard her fixing the kitchen fire for the night.

Dorothy had gathered the little, starved body of Celia in her arms. The little one sighed, sobbed, and then lay still. Before Dorothy had realized it, Celia was fast asleep—so wearied was the little one.

But the older girl lay, broad awake, for some minutes. Her breath puffed out in plainly visible mist, the air of the room was so cold. The freez-

ing water in the pitcher on the washstand snapped and crackled. A shade had been raised to the top of the sash, and that ghostly light always present when it is snowing at night, faintly illuminated the bare room.

"Swish! swish! swish!" the snow beat upon the clapboards outside. She saw that the lower sash was completely covered by the snow. The drifts were piling up on this side of the house, and Dorothy finally dropped to sleep, hugging her little charge, with the feeling that she was being buried alive beneath the soft, white mantle.

CHAPTER XII

TAVIA IS MYSTIFIED

TAVIA, among other things, had a long Latin verse to translate. This was one of the "extras," or "conditions" heaped upon the already burdened shoulders of the irrepressible.

"But if Olaine wasn't such a mean, mean thing she wouldn't have given me all those black marks—so't I couldn't go with Dorothy on her walk," Tavia said to some of the other girls who looked in on her that Saturday afternoon.

From which it may clearly be drawn that Tavia was one of those persons who desire "to eat their cake and have it, too!" She had had her fun, in breaking the school rules; but she did not like to pay for the privilege.

"I wouldn't mind if it was mathematics," wailed Tavia, when Ned Ebony and Cologne came in to condole with her. "But this beastly old Latin——"

"Oh, dear me! that reminds me," said the slow-going Cologne. "I *hate* mathematics. There

used to be a problem in the arithmetic about how much water goes over Niagara Falls in a given time——”

“Pooh!” interrupted Tavia, “I can tell you off-hand how much water goes over Niagara Falls to a quart.”

“Oh, Tavia! you can’t,” gasped Cologne, her eyes big with awe.

“That’s easy. Two pints,” chuckled Tavia, and Cologne was for some time studying out the answer!

“If you’d only learned to be ambidextrous in your youth, Tavia,” said Edna Black, smiling. “*Then* you could write out that Latin with one hand and do sums with the other—and so get over your old ‘conditions’ quicker and come and have some fun.”

“Ha! that’s what Mrs. Pangborn said yesterday,” interposed Cologne, coming out of her brown study. “She said that with just a little practise we should find it just as easy to do anything with one hand as with the other.”

Tavia looked up from her paper again, and giggled. “Wish I’d heard her,” she said.

“Why?”

“I’d asked her how she supposed a boy would ever learn to put his left hand in the right hand pocket of his trousers. Wouldn’t *that* have stumped even Mrs. Pangborn?”

"And it might have won you another black mark. That fatal sense of humor of yours will get you into deep water yet," said Cologne, wagging her head.

"Oh, go on out and play—both of you!" cried Tavia. "I couldn't go with Dorothy, and I'll *never* get this done if you don't leave me alone. Miss Olaine said I must do it before supper time."

"You'd better hurry, then," declared Ned.

"That's right," said Rose-Mary. "It's getting dark now—and oh! it's beginning to snow."

It was snowing hard when Tavia went down to the office to deliver her papers into the strict Miss Olaine's hands. The mail bag had just come in and the teacher was distributing the letters and cards into the pigeon-holes which served the school for letter boxes. Each member of the senior class had her own little box.

Tavia knew better than to interrupt Miss Olaine at her present task. The whole school had learned by now that the new assistant was not to be trifled with. Miss Olaine was as severe as though she were a prison warden instead of a school teacher.

Idly Tavia watched the distribution of the mail. She saw a fat letter put into her own pigeon-hole and knew it was from her brother Johnny. Dorothy's box was right next to it. Already there were several letters lying in it, for her correspondence was large.

Then Tavia saw Miss Olaine hesitate with a postal card in her hand. The teacher had evidently picked it up with the message side uppermost. Something on the card caught Miss Olaine's eye.

She gasped. Then the teacher turned white and staggered to a chair. The girl almost sprang forward to assist her; but Miss Olaine recovered her usual stern manner.

She read the card through, however—there was no doubt of that. Then she turned it over slowly and read the address.

Tavia waited.

Miss Olaine slowly recovered from her emotion—either fear or amazement, Tavia did not know which. She had evidently forgotten the girl's presence.

She stood up again. The other letters had fallen, and were scattered on the desk. Miss Olaine held the postal card as though she contemplated tearing it in pieces.

But evidently the remembrance that Uncle Sam's mail laws cannot be violated with impunity, held the teacher's hand. Slowly she raised the card and placed it—in Dorothy Dale's letter box!

"Now, whatever under the sun can *that* mean?" whispered Tavia to herself. "For Dorothy! And she was going to tear it up——"

"Well, Miss! what do you want?" snapped

Miss Olaine, suddenly. She seemed quite to have recovered from her emotion, whatever it had been. She spoke more tartly than usual, and glared at Tavia as though the girl had no business there.

"I brought down my exercise as you told me, Miss Olaine," said Tavia, who was not at all awed by the teacher's grimness.

"Leave it," was the short command.

"Can—can I have our mail?"

"You will get your mail at supper time—with the rest of the girls," replied Miss Olaine.

"But I only thought—as long as I was here——"

"There are rules to be abided by, Miss Octavia," said the teacher, sternly. "If you would try to remember that, you would get along better at this school," and she showed that she expected Tavia to leave the office at once.

"My goodness!" exclaimed Tavia, under her breath, as she departed, "isn't she the old cat? And she almost tore up Dorothy's card! I wonder what it meant? Humph! just the same if that card doesn't show up in Dorothy's mail to-night, I shall tell her, and we'll just get after old Olaine. I'd like to drive her out of the school, anyway."

Tavia, however, forgot about Miss Olaine's sternness—even forgot about the mystery of the postal card—when the supper bell rang and Dorothy had not returned. By that time the snow

was sifting down steadily, gathering in depth each minute, and the wind had begun to sigh in the pines "like long lost spirits," as Ned Ebony said.

"Oh, dear, me! where can she have gone?" cried Tavia.

Soon it would be pitch dark—or, as dark as it could be with the snow falling. It looked as though a white curtain had been drawn right down outside each window that Tavia looked out of. She hurried downstairs, forgetting all about mail which was now "open", and asked to see Mrs. Pangborn.

The principal was at tea, and when Tavia burst in upon her she, being used to the girl's exuberance of temperament, went right on eating thin strips of buttered toast and sipping tea.

"And if it *is* snowing hard, my dear, don't you think that our sensible Dorothy will realize it—quite as soon as *we* do?" queried Mrs. Pangborn.

"But, suppose there was no house near when it began to snow?"

"Dorothy was going out the Old Mill road; wasn't she? So you said."

"Yes, ma'am."

"And there isn't a house on that road that is out of sight of at least two other houses," laughed the principal of Glenwood. "Oh, my dear! Dorothy has undoubtedly been caught in the storm—

and has been wise enough to take shelter until morning. Don't worry, my dear."

Mrs. Pangborn was so cool about it that Tavia was bound to have her anxiety quenched. Only—she *did* feel as though something was not altogether right with her absent friend. But Tavia went away to supper, feeling somehow relieved.

The girls of Glenwood Hall usually had a good time at this hour. As long as they did not become too hilarious, the teachers had been in the habit of overlooking a certain amount of boisterousness and display of high spirits.

That is, so it had been up to this term. But since Miss Olaine had been in the school a general drawing of the lines over all the girls had gone on until more than Tavia and her immediate friends complained of the strictness of the school discipline.

This evening Miss Olaine sat like a thundercloud at the head of the seniors' table. Every time a girl laughed aloud the stern teacher turned her baleful glance that way.

"Something's up!" whispered Edna to Tavia. "Never has Miss Olaine looked as grim as to-night. What have *you* been doing to her, Tavia?"

"Not a thing!" declared the girl addressed. But the remark set Tavia to thinking of the incident of the postal card. She hurried through her supper, was excused early, and went **directly**

to the office for her own mail—and for Dorothy's.

"If that card isn't there——"

This was Tavia's unfinished thought. She obtained Johnny's letter and Dorothy's packet of missives, and ran upstairs to the room. There she spread all of her chum's letters out under the reading lamp.

There was more than one card; but Tavia knew the one Miss Olaine had read, very well. The other cards were souvenir cards; this was a regular correspondence card, addressed to "Miss Dorothy Dale, Glenwood School." There was no mistaking it.

"Well, it's here," Tavia murmured, with a sigh of relief. "She didn't make way with it. I wonder——"

She turned the card over. It was the most natural thing in the world to read the brief, type-written message there:

"Tom Moran disappeared after the Rector St. School fire, two years ago. His Union Card has lapsed. We know nothing about his whereabouts—if he is alive.

"I. K. TIERNEY, *Sec'y.*"

"Why— isn't that funny?" gasped Tavia. "Whoever heard the like? Yes! it's really got Dorothy's name on it. Sounds just as though she

had asked this man, Tierney, about this other person, Tom Moran!

"I never heard of either of them. What interest can Dorothy have in them? But—hold on!" exclaimed Tavia, suddenly startled by a new thought. "*What interest has Miss Olaine in the men—or in Dorothy's inquiry, whichever it may be?*"

CHAPTER XIII

TUNNELING OUT

WHAT awoke Dorothy she could not tell. For the first few moment she lay still, realizing that there was a deadly chill in the air outside of the heavy mass of bedclothing that weighed her body down. The frosty air did not seem at all like the air of the room she occupied with Tavia at Glenwood Hall.

Then—with something of a shock—she remembered that she was not with Tavia, or at Glenwood Hall!

She felt the pressure of the warm little body of Celia, curled up like a kitten in a ball, beside her in the bed of the best room at Mrs. Hogan's house. There was light enough in the room for her to see the grim, bare nature of the place—its ugly furniture and the plain rag carpet on the floor.

She looked at the uncurtained window and to her amazement saw that, from bottom to top, it was masked with snow. It looked as though the drift was higher than the very top of the window!

Was it still snowing, or had the storm ceased? Not a sound came from without; nor could she detect a sound within the house.

There was no clock in the room and Dorothy's own watch was in the kitchen where she had left her clothing. She stirred about to gain an easier position, and the little body of Celia Moran uncurled.

"Oh! oh! Tom—Dorothy——"

The murmur of the child's voice served to wake Dorothy properly. Celia was dreaming—of Dorothy herself, and of her lost brother. The older girl kissed her, laid her tousled head upon the pillow, and then crept out of the warm feathers into the cold, cold room.

There was a matchbox on the mantel behind the small sheet-iron stove. With chattering teeth the Glenwood girl reached the matches, stooped by the door of the stove, scratched the lucifer, and ignited the shavings and corncobs which made sufficient kindling in the firebox to set off the hardwood sticks piled in above the tinder.

The fire began to roar almost instantly. She darted back across the icy floor and crept again into bed. Whether it was morning, or not, Dorothy determined to have a fire and somehow kill the deadly chill of that guest room.

Celia still slept. The yellow light of the fire began to send dancing reflections upon the ceil-

ing through the perforated draft of the stove. Dorothy lay there and listened to the fire's roar; but there was no other sound in the house for some time.

The atmosphere of the room perceptibly changed. There was a little blue haze in the air and the smell of burning varnish, for the careful Mrs. Hogan had painted the stove to keep it from rusting and perhaps this was the first time it had been used during the winter.

By and by Dorothy heard the creak of the stair under the heavy tread of the farm woman. It must, the schoolgirl judged, be time to rise; yet the snow drift kept out the morning light.

She heard Mrs. Hogan at the kitchen stove, raking down the ashes and rattling the dampers. By and by she came through the hall and opened the door.

"Ha!" she said. "Ye have a boomin' fire—an' all goin' up the chimney, av coorse. Fuel is nothin' to the rich. Git up out o' that, Cely Moran! D'ye wanter lie abed all day? 'Tis long past sivin o'clock, and we're snowed in to the sicond story—an' still 'tis snowin'. Git up, I say!"

Meanwhile she had partly closed the back draft and the fire roared less angrily. Celia stirred sleepily.

"Good morning!" Dorothy said to Mrs.

Hogan. "I am going to get up, too. Will you put my clothes in here? It is getting nice and warm now."

"I'll sind thim in by Cely. Git out o' that bed, now—plague o' me life! Scatter out inter the kitchen," and she drove the little one before her as one would shoo a chicken.

"It really isn't snowing *now*; is it?" cried Dorothy, before Mrs. Hogan could shut the door.

"Indade it is—snowin' hard. I kin see it from me winder upstairs. But the house is drifted around, till there's a bank before me kitchen door higher than the lintel. And me' kitchen pump's froze. Lucky there's water in the tea kettle and I'll soon have it thawed. Ye'll find water—or ice—in that pitcher yonder, Miss."

The woman retreated. Celia, as soon as she had got into her own clothes, brought in Dorothy's garments and hung them carefully on chairs about the stove to warm before the bigger girl put them on.

"You're a dear little maid!" cried Dorothy. "Thank you."

"I wish I could go to that school and work for you," said Celia, wistfully. "Don't you suppose I could?"

"I am afraid not, Celia," returned Dorothy, yet wishing, too, that it were possible. "You try

your best to please Mrs. Hogan. And meantime I'll find your brother as quick as I can."

Had Dorothy known what was written on that postal card from the secretary of the ironworkers' union, which message had so puzzled her friend Tavia, she could not have spoken with the assurance she did.

Dorothy dressed hurriedly and managed to get enough of the ice in the pitcher melted, meanwhile, on the stove hearth, to enable her to make her toilet. The sting of the icy water upon her eyes and temples served to wake her up and started her pulse at a quicker beat. She ran out into the smoky kitchen, to see Celia setting the table while Mrs. Hogan fried the usual pork and johnny cakes.

"Oh, that *does* smell so good!" cried the girl from Glenwood School.

Mrs. Hogan smiled—and her smile was rare indeed!—when she heard this. She considered that she could safely tack on an additional quarter for breakfast in the final bill she meant to present for Dorothy's entertainment.

"Oh, see here!" exclaimed Celia, and ran to open the door. A white wall of packed snow faced them.

"Oh, dear me! we are really snowed in," said Dorothy. "However will we manage to dig a way out?"

"Come away from that, now, ye little plague,"

spoke Mrs. Hogan to Celia. "Arrah, now! see what ye've done. Looker that mess of snow on the floor."

A hodful, at least, had become detached and fallen inward. Dorothy ran for the brush and dustpan which hung against the bricks behind the stove.

"I'll clean it up, Mrs. Hogan," she said. "You go about your work, Celia."

"We'll have to dig a tunnel through to the shed door after breakfast," declared Mrs. Hogan. "We've got to get through the shed to the barn, an' then into the hen house. Surely, we can't l'ave the critters ter starve. And there's no knowing when this storm will stop. Ye'll not git to school this day, I'm thinkin', me young lady."

"I am only glad that I am not out there in the lane under all this snow," replied Dorothy, gravely.

After breakfast she went upstairs with Celia to peer out at the storm. It was, indeed, a blizzard. Scarcely a landmark was visible through the falling snow. The fences were, of course, long since drifted over; and the snow had been blown into the farmyard in a great mound, piled against the side of the house to the sill of the second floor windows, and completely covering the roofs of the lower buildings.

Mrs. Hogan put a huge boiler on the stove when they came down. She had not thawed her

pump as yet; but she opened the barricaded door and into this boiler shoveled snow, from time to time, until she had melted sufficient to well fill the receptacle, and had dug quite a cavern in the snowbank.

Then, dressed in her half-mannish costume, the Amazon set to work with a steel shovel to really excavate a tunnel through the drift to the woodshed door. Dorothy and Celia helped by "trimming" the sides and roof of the tunnel, and tramping down the excavated snow under foot.

The passage to the woodshed door was short. Beyond the shed the snow filled all the space to the stables, and was heaped fifteen feet high. They cut out the snow in blocks and heaped it to one side within the shed. In two hours Mrs. Hogan, working as though tireless, opened the way to the stables and they could feed the stock. Fortunately there was a trap between the barn and the hennery through which they could throw corn and oats to the flock.

Tunneling through the snowbank Celia thought to be lots of fun; and Dorothy found it amusing. Mrs. Hogan's grim face and grimmer remarks, however, proved that she considered the situation quite serious.

"You young'uns kape yer feet dry. Have no chills, nor colds, nor other didoes, now; for 'tis no knowin' how long 'twould take a dochter to

git here through these drifts—an' however would we git word to such, anyhow, I dunno?"

Dorothy and Celia wrapped shawls around their shoulders again and went to the upper windows to look out. Although the flakes were bigger now, and the snow was not gathering so fast, they could not see far along the lane; and not a moving object appeared upon the surface of the drifts.

"Oh, I'm glad you are here, Dorothy Dale," whispered Celia. "It would jes' be *dreadful* to be smothered in with snow like this, with only Mrs. Ann Hogan—yes, it would!"

CHAPTER XIV

SEVERAL SURPRISING THINGS

"Now you've got to just tell me all about what it means!" declared Tavia, the moment the door had closed on the other girls and she and Dorothy were alone in their old room at Glenwood Hall. "Don't you see that I'm just eaten up with curiosity?"

"Why, you don't seem to have lost any flesh at all," laughed Dorothy, pinching one of her friend's cheeks while she kissed the other.

"Stop tantalizing! What does that card mean? Who is Tom Moran? How *dare* you have a gentleman friend, Dorothy Dale, with whom I am not acquainted?"

"What nonsense," said Dorothy. "Tom Moran is—why, just Tom Moran."

"Lucid as mud! And what, or who, is he to Olaine?"

"You puzzle me a whole lot more than you are puzzled yourself," complained Dorothy. "I don't

understand—not the least little bit—what you tell me about Miss Olaine.”

“She was just as scared as she could be when she read this message to you, Doro,” and Tavia thrust the typewritten postal card under her friend’s eyes. “Read it and tell me what it means.”

“Oh, I can do *that*.”

“Well, do it!” cried Tavia. “Don’t hesitate so.”

“First I must tell you about Celia Moran——”

“Another stranger!” gasped Tavia.

“Just the dearest, funniest, most pitiful little girl——”

“I’m glad it’s a girl this time,” sniffed Tavia.

“Of course—Celia!”

“Well! go on?” urged Tavia.

So her friend began at the beginning—with her first meeting with the child from the foundling asylum in the Belding Station. And she related the particulars, too, of her recent adventure in the snow and her two nights and the Sunday spent at the Hogan farmhouse.

“That Hogan woman is a regular ogress. I wish I could take Celia away from there this very day,” sighed Dorothy. “Did you see her when she drove me in here?”

“The giantess? Of course! She looked so fun-

ny in that gray and purple sweater and the green hood——”

“No matter for laughing. Do you know what she made Mrs. Pangborn pay her for ‘me keep’, as she called it?”

“No.”

“Twenty dollars—think of it? She’s a terrible miser—and that poor little thing isn’t half fed.”

“The poor kid!” agreed Tavia, whose warm heart was touched by the story Dorothy told her.

“She wanted to come with us so badly,” sighed Dorothy. “But Mrs. Hogan made her stay and keep up the fire, and watch to see if the hens laid any eggs. They bring ’em right in from the nests for fear they will freeze,” explained Dorothy.

“I really believe, Tavia, if that little thing hadn’t been out gathering eggs Saturday evening, I would have laid down in the snow and died!”

“Oh, Doro! How dreadful!”

“I was ‘all in’, as Ned and Nat would say. Just at the last gasp when Celia heard me crying for help.”

“I’d like to hug her for that,” cried Tavia, her eyes shining.

“And so, I must find her brother if I can,” continued Dorothy, not very lucidly, it must be confessed. But Tavia had gained a general idea of the matter now and she said:

“That’s Tom Moran?”

"Yes. That's her brother. 'He builds bridges, and things.' That is what Celia says. She remembers a lot for such a little thing. So I wrote to the local union in the city and asked if they knew him. And this," said Dorothy, pursing her lips and shaking her head, "is their answer. It's—it's not very hopeful——"

"But for goodness sake tell me what Miss Olaine has to do with it?" demanded Tavia.

"Now, dear, you know very well I can't tell you *that*," admitted Dorothy, thoughtfully.

"She was just as startled——"

"Do you suppose it was Tom Moran's name that startled her, or the signature of the secretary of the union? Or—or——?"

"Or, what else? What else is there in the note to scare her?" demanded Tavia.

"The school fire. Do you remember? It was an awful fire. Some of the children failed to get out in the fire drill. They were shut into a room on an upper floor, it seems to me—with a teacher——?"

"I can't remember about it," quoth Tavia, disappointed. "I remember the papers were full of it at the time. But what had this Tom Moran to do with it—with the fire, I mean?"

"I—I can't think. I don't remember his name, or any other detail of the fire," agreed Dorothy.

"Let's ask Miss Olaine."

"I wouldn't dare! You wouldn't dare yourself, Tavia?"

"No—o. I guess I wouldn't. She—she's so different from the other teachers. I feel just as though she'd slap me!"

"Wait a minute!" exclaimed Dorothy, thinking hard. "Something Mrs. Pangborn said to me—I remember.

"What about? What's Mrs. Pangborn got to do with the mystery?"

"She hinted that there had been something in Miss Olaine's life that excused her harshness—something that if we girls knew it would make us forgive her irritability."

"What is it?" asked the curious Tavia.

"I don't know. I haven't the least idea. Mrs. Pangborn intimated that she had no right to tell us."

"Why, I think that's puzzling," admitted Tavia. "But I can't work up much sympathy for Olaine on *that* showing. I want details."

"And I want details of Tom Moran's mix-up with the Rector Street School fire. Oh, Tavia!"

"What is it?" demanded her friends, quite startled by the way Dorothy had clutched at her.

"I know how we can find out."

"About Miss Olaine?"

"About Tom Moran and the fire. There are the files of the city papers. Father used to always

keep files of *The Bugle* when he ran it in Dalton. Let's go to town the very next chance we get and go to the office of the *Courier*. We can read all about the fire of 'two years ago.'

"Of course it would take you, Dorothy Dale, to think of that," said Tavia, admiringly.

"Will you do it?"

"Of course. We'll go Saturday."

"But you will have to be careful and get no 'conditions' this week," warned Dorothy.

"Oh! I'll be as good as gold—you see," promised Tavia.

And, really, it did seem as though even Miss Olaine could find nothing for which to find fault in Tavia's conduct that week. The irrepressible tried very hard indeed to attend to nothing but her studies—and her meals!

She was almost perfect, even, in her French, and Tavia was not partial to French. "Goodness knows, I'll never get to Paris, and what use is there in learning French in these United States, just so's to be able to read the menus at the fashionable hotels?" complained Tavia.

"But, it is considered quite *the* thing," suggested Ned Ebony.

"Oh, sure! everybody who's made a little money in oil, or coal, or pork, or wheat, has to have a French teacher. Say, Doro! do you remember

Mrs. Painter, in Dalton? The lady whose husband had an *awful* lot of money left him?"

"Oh, I remember!" laughed Dorothy. "Poor woman! She wanted to be *so* refined and educated all of a sudden."

"That's the lady," said Tavia.

"What about her?" demanded Cologne.

"She tried to learn French. At any rate, she learned a few phrases, and she used to work them into conversation in such a funny way," Tavia explained, giggling over the thought of the poor lady.

"She went into the butcher shop one day and asked Sam Smike, the butcher, if he had any 'bon-vivant'."

"'Bon-vivant'? gasped Cologne. "What—what——"

"That's what Sam wanted to know," giggled Tavia. "He says to her: 'Boned *what*, ma'am?'"

"And Mrs. Painter said, perfectly serious: 'Why, bon-vivant, you know. That's the French for good liver.'"

"Why, Tavia! how ridiculous!" exclaimed Ned Ebony. "It couldn't be——"

"It's true, just the same. At any rate, Sam Smike told it to me himself."

However, even French did not floor Tavia that week. On Saturday Mrs. Pangborn made no ob-

jection to the two friends going to the city by train—presumably to do a little shopping.

And they did shop. They had three full hours in town, and they could afford the time. Then they went to the *Courier* office, and Dorothy sent in her father's card and her own to one of the editors, and he kindly came out and allowed them to visit "the morgue," as he called the biographical room, where a young man in spectacles and with a streak of dust on the side of his nose, lifted down heavy, bound volumes of the *Courier* and showed them how to find the articles for which they were in search.

The Rector Street School fire had been a local disaster of some moment. The first hastily written account, on the day of the fire, did not contain that which interested Dorothy and Tavia. But in the second day's edition they found what they had never expected to learn—about both Celia Moran's brother and Miss Olaine.

CHAPTER XV

WHY DID HE DISAPPEAR?

"MISSSES Dale and Travers, late for supper," said the sharp voice of Miss Olaine. "Your excuses, please?"

This was the chums' welcome as they entered the big entrance hall of Glenwood School after dark.

"Oh, Miss Olaine! the train was late, and we stopped on the way to——"

"That will do, Miss Travers," said the teacher. "Other girls who came on that train were here ten minutes ago."

"But they ran their legs off," sniffed Tavia, when the teacher broke in with:

"And you took your time, of course, Octavia. Ten lines extra—Latin—Tuesday morning. I will point out which lines Monday. That is all."

Tavia flared up and was evidently about to make the matter worse. But Dorothy pinched her, and pinched hard.

"You remember what we agreed coming over

from the train," she warned. "Swallow it like a man!"

"Oh—oh!" gasped Tavia. "She does make me so mad, Doro."

"You wouldn't have got the condition if you had kept still. That tongue of yours, Tavia, is like what Mrs. Hogan accused Celia of having: It's hung in the middle and wags at both ends."

"Well! it's not fair!" grumbled her school chum.

"Of course not; but we agreed, fair or not, to bear with Miss Olaine—and to urge the other girls to bear with her. When she sits and wrings her hands and bites her lips so, we know what she is thinking of; don't we?"

"Oh, yes!" admitted Tavia, with a shudder. "I know she is to be pitied. But it is dreadful hard to be picked upon the way she picks upon me——"

"Now, you know that's nonsense," replied Dorothy, sensibly. "If you would not answer back and give her an excuse for punishing you, you'd not be in trouble. She gave *me* no condition."

"Oh, that's your luck, that's all," sighed Tavia.

"You know that's not so," replied Dorothy, mildly. "Do be careful, Tavia. And let us tell the other girls and get them to try to be kind to Miss Olaine. I am very sorry for her."

"Well—I s'pose—of course I am, too!" ex-

claimed the really warm-hearted Tavia. "But she *does* get my 'mad up' so easy!"

"You get mad without much provocation, it seems to me. Now, after church service to-morrow, let's get the girls all in our room—our crowd, I mean—and tell them about the Rector Street School fire."

"All right. The poor thing——"

"Miss Olaine?"

"Of course," said Tavia. "The poor thing must be always remembering about the little kiddies, and how she came near to forgetting them——"

"And if it hadn't been for the man on the steel beam outside——"

"Of course, that was your Tom Moran," said Tavia.

"Celia's Tom Moran," corrected Dorothy.

But, never mind the further discussion of the matter between the two friends. The following is what Dorothy had copied out of the file of the *Courier*, and she read it to the other girls the next day, as proposed:

"The burning of that fire-trap, the Rector Street School, long since condemned by everybody but the Board of Education, could scarcely have been regrettable had it not been for the several terrifying incidents connected with it. Some of the

hairbreadth escapes were related in yesterday's *Courier*; but the details of that incident which was most perilous—the salvation of the seven little girls and the teacher left to perish on the upper floor of the schoolhouse—were not known when we went to press last evening.

“Although our fire department boys did their duty at every point, the spectacular rescue of these seven children and the teacher was accomplished by men at work upon the steel structure of the new Adrian Building, which was going up directly beside the burned schoolhouse.

“At the height of the fire the teacher and her charges were discovered at the window of a small room on the top floor, by a workman on a steel girder that was being raised by the steam winch to its place in the structure. The girder was twenty feet long and the man—by the name of Moran—was riding the beam when the fire broke out.

“He called to some helpers, and signalled the engineer below how he wished the girder handled. With a cable they swung the end of the heavy piece of steel so that its end rested on the sill of the window of the room where the teacher and her charges were trapped. The other end of the girder rested in the framework of the new building.

“Then the teacher, Rebecca Olaine, of 127 Morrell Street, this city, opened the lower sash and got out on the broad window sill. She was able to

lift and pass to Moran each of the children, and he ran back along the narrow bridge and handed them to other men waiting beyond.

"Miss Olaine seemed to lose her strength when the last child was saved, and she could not walk the girder with the workman's help. Fire had burst into the room then, and the smoke was so thick that just what occurred at the window could not well be seen from the ground.

"But in trying to drag the teacher forth, Moran seemed to lose his footing, and fell back into the room. Two other workmen seized the teacher and carried her, insensible, to safety.

"By that time members of Hose Company Number 7 reached the steel bridge and took upon themselves the rescue of the workman. He was pulled out of the fire somewhat scorched; but inquiry at the hospital this afternoon failed to discover his whereabouts. He had had his burns dressed, and had left the hospital early in the day.

"Our reporter could learn nothing at 127 Morrell Street regarding the condition of Miss Olaine, save that the doctor had forbidden her seeing anybody at present. None of the children saved with her was even scorched."

"Well!" gasped Nita Brent. "Whatever do you think about *that*? Is it sure-to-goodness *our* Olaine?"

"Our own dear, timid, sweet Miss Olaine," drawled Tavia who—although she agreed with Dorothy that the terrible adventure through which Miss Olaine had passed, should be considered as a reason for the teacher's unfortunate manner and disposition—could not so freely forgive her as did Dorothy.

"The poor thing!" murmured Cologne.

"I don't know!" blurted out Ned Ebony, shaking her head. "What's it all for, Doro?"

"I think we ought to pity her and—and take her scoldings with a wee bit of patience," said Dorothy, quietly. "She must have been greatly shaken up by the fire——"

"So she wants to shake *us* down," observed Tavia, "to pay up for it."

"It made her nervous and irritable," said Dorothy, with a look at her chum. "She is more to be pitied——"

"Than censured," groaned the irrepressible Tavia. "All right, Doro! I'll agree to play no more tricks on her."

"You'd better decide on that," grumbled Ned. "Otherwise you will not graduate from old Glenwood with flying colors."

"Let's all 'be easy' on Miss Olaine," said Dorothy, calmly. "I understand that Miss Olaine was not fit to teach for a year after the fire, and that the reason she came to Glenwood is because it

made her nervous to teach in a big, crowded city school again. I got that much out of Miss Pangborn this morning after prayers.

"Of course, if Doro says we must treat her nicely, we must," said Nita. "But she—she's just an old bear!"

"Who dare's call my Doro a bear?" demanded Tavia. "There will at once be trouble *bruin*."

"Now, you know very well I meant Olaine," complained Nita.

"She's just horrid," added Molly Richards. "She's given *me* conditions—just for *nothing*—too!"

"Don't weep about it, Dicky," advised Tavia. "I claim to have the greatest record for receiving extras without cause since the beginning of Miss Olaine's reign."

"Anyhow," said Cologne, "if Dorothy says we ought to excuse her, and try and treat her nicely——"

"Don't put it that way," urged Dorothy. "Don't you all think she is to be excused?"

"Well, wasn't anybody else ever in a fire?" began Ned Ebony, hotly.

"Think of Shagbark, Myshirt, and Abedwego!" exclaimed Tavia. "Weren't they the three worthies who went into the fiery furnace?"

"But I hope they didn't teach school afterward,

if it made 'em as cross as Miss Olaine," sighed Cologne, as she arranged her hair before the glass.

It was agreed, however, that the graduating class of Glenwood was to be particularly nice to Miss Olaine for the rest of the school year.

"We'll just heap coals of fire on her head," said Nita.

"Hope it'll singe her hair, then," sniffed Tavia.

When the others were gone, she and Dorothy discussed the other—and more interesting—detail of the Rector Street School fire. The other girls had been told nothing about Celia and Tom Moran.

"Where do you suppose he went after that fire?" queried Dorothy, sitting on the edge of the bed with her chin in the cup of her hand.

"Tom Moran?"

"Of course."

"The paper said, several days later, you know, that he had left town. People had looked him up. The parents of the children who were saved with the teacher wanted to make up a purse for him."

"And this card," said Dorothy, reflectively, taking the postal card from her pocket, "says that the union knows nothing about him. He disappeared after that fire—and he was a regular hero!"

"Sure he was," agreed Tavia. "Maybe he was such a modest one that he ran away."

But Dorothy was not listening to her jokes. She murmured, thoughtfully:

"I wonder if Miss Olaine knows what became of Tom Moran?"

CHAPTER XVI

DOROTHY'S WITS AT WORK

"THE Night of the White Giant," whispered Ned Ebony, shrilly, as she put her head in at the door of the chums' room at Glenwood.

"Boo! how you scared me!" exclaimed Tavia, preparing to throw her Latin grammar—it was a book she would willingly have spared altogether—at Ned's devoted head.

"Hist!"

Nita Brent looked over the stooping Edna. Above *her* head at the narrow opening appeared the rather puffy-looking face of Cologne. It was evident that the "heavy lady" had been asleep, but now she yawned and said:

"Hist twice! Come on, girls!"

"Don't shoot, Tavia. Like Davy Crockett's coon, we'll come down," said Ned, dodging the threatening book.

"You'll have Olaine—or some other teacher—upon our trail," gasped Nita.

"What's up?" demanded Dorothy, shutting her book and leaving a hairpin for a bookmark.

"We are. So must you be. And *they* will have to!" declared Ned. "We're for getting the whole bunch. It's the Night of the White Giant, I tell you."

"Oh, goody, goody-gander!" exclaimed Tavia, clapping her hands—but softly. "I had forgotten. We haven't had one this winter."

"It's kid tricks, girls," complained Dorothy.

"List to her! Wow!" gasped Tavia, and landed a soft sofa pillow right in the back of Dorothy's neck. "Don't you dare suggest we're growing old."

"'Silver threads among the gold'," quoted Cologne. "I know. She's getting rheumatic, too. Second childhood is close upon her——"

"Stop ranting and come on!" commanded Ned Ebony. "High overshoes—mittens—everything! the snow is just soft enough. If we're careful we'll make Olaine's eyes bulge out in the morning. *She* never saw an old-fashioned Glenwood 'white giant.'"

"'The little dimpled darling has never seen Christmas yet,'" quoted Tavia in a high, mincing tone. "Where's my rub-a-dub-dubs, Dorothy Dale? Did you eat 'em, I want to know?"

But when the chums were dressed, and the other girls of the upper class filed into the corridor, dressed for the frolic, there was little noise. This

was an escapade that was not indulged in every winter by the Glenwood girls, for not often was the snow in the state it was at present.

There was plenty of it; it was soft and "packy," and there was starlight enough to aid them in their work, although there was no moon.

The pedestal of the statue they proposed erecting was made of several huge balls rolled on the campus and then set upright in a circle, in the middle of the lawn, facing the teachers' windows.

Other smaller balls were rolled swiftly and, as they had to be brought from a greater distance as the figure progressed, they were rolled upon sleds and dragged to the scene of operations. With pieces of board and a couple of shovels Tavia, Dorothy and Cologne shaped the round body of the giant as it grew in bulk and height.

"We'll make the biggest and the tallest giant Glenwood ever saw," declared Tavia. "Come on with that ball, Neddie. Hoist it up here!"

When one of the snowballs, raised in the arms of four girls to be adjusted upon the figure, chanced to burst like a bomb, there was much smothered hilarity—from those who were not engulfed in the mishap.

"Oh! oh! oh!" cried Nita. "I feel as if I'd been caught in an avalanche in the Alps! Goodness me! how wet that snow is!"

"All the dry snow's 'give out', Nita. We've got to use the wet kind," giggled Tavia.

"If you had two quarts of snow down **your** back——" began Ned Ebony, in disgust.

"Come on! come on!" urged Cologne. "You're wasting time. Who knows but Olaine will be out here any minute?"

"Oh, I hope not!" cried one of the other girls. "I am trying my very best to treat her nicely; and I am sorry for her. But she is the most cantankerous thing! So there!"

"Come on! come on!" Tavia kept urging. "Hand 'em up here—— My goodness gracious, Agnes! I almost went down *that* time. If I only had a nice young man up here to help me hold on this slippery eminence——"

"Where would you ever get a young man—nice or otherwise—at Glenwood?" demanded Ned Ebony.

"Don't know. Advertise for one, I guess," grunted the struggling Tavia. "'Lost, Strayed, or Stolen—One young man—preferably blue eyed.' Going to put that in the 'Agony Column' of the New York Screecher——"

"Oh, Tavia!" gasped Dorothy, standing up straight on the giant's "waist line" and staring up at her friend.

"What's up now? Mercy!" ejaculated Tavia,

making a grab for her. "You'll be down next, if you don't look out. What's the matter?"

"You—you gave me an idea," said Dorothy, slowly.

"Hope I never give you another," declared Tavia. "Look out, now! here comes that part of the giant called—colloquially—his 'dining room'. It must be adjusted properly. Let's have a real shapely giant—do."

"He'll look as though he had swallowed Jack the Giant Killer, all right," panted Ned Ebony.

"Not much! Give me that shovel," cried Tavia. "I am going to slice off some of his aldermanic proportions. Huh! we don't want him to look as though he'd suffered from earthquake and everything had fallen into his 'dining room,' do we?"

"You're the most dreadful girl!" sighed Cologne.

Meanwhile Dorothy was thinking deeply. There was too much going on for her to confide her "idea" to her chum. And, later, she decided to wait and see how it "panned out."

The white giant grew apace. The girls dragged around two of the gardener's ladders, by the aid of which they finished the effigy handsomely. He had a noble round head, set firmly on a "bull neck"; a white cardboard nose stuck in the middle of his face, with pieces of coal for teeth——

"Shows the deplorable result of not using Some-

body's Toothpaste—a 'horrible example' for the youngsters. Miss Mingle is always at 'em to use their toothbrushes," declared Tavia.

The grinning mask of the white giant had black eyes, as well, and a bushel basket served as a hat. The front of his waistcoat was decorated with round turnips for buttons. Altogether he was a striking-looking figure in the starlight, but was even more so the next day when the sun shone on him.

His head was as high as the second story windows. The rest of the school "oh-ed" and "ah-ed" about it, wondering how the big girls had built such an enormous statue.

Miss Olaine expected Mrs. Pangborn to consider the frolic a punishable offence. But the principal recognized the "white giant" as an established outlet for the exuberance of the senior class of her pupils. Many a snowman of huge proportions stood on the campus for weeks, until the rains and winds of March and April carried away the last vestige of the heaped-up snow.

Miss Olaine was used to the strict discipline of the city public school; she could not understand Mrs. Pangborn's leniency in her treatment of perfectly harmless escapades—and those girls who took part in them.

Meanwhile Dorothy's wits—spurred by Tavia's irresponsible remark about the "Agony Column"

of the newspaper—had been working overtime. The personal column of a newspaper did not appeal to her; but she believed that advertising for little Celia's brother might bring about some result.

She chose the Salvation Army paper, in which she knew there was a column devoted to requests for news of "absent friends," and she wrote to the editor in New York all about Celia, and why she so desired to get some trace of the missing iron-worker.

The editor kindly put her paragraph in the paper and sent her a copy with the request marked with a blue pencil. And that marked paragraph occasioned more excitement in Glenwood school than Dorothy expected.

Matters had run along pretty smoothly after the Night of the White Giant, and the giant himself was already a devastated, melting pillar on the school lawn. The Easter vacation was in sight.

"You'll surely go home with me, Doro—to dear old Dalton?" sang Tavia, hugging her friend. "You promised——"

"And I wouldn't miss it for anything!" declared Dorothy, laughing gaily. "I'm just crazy to see all the folks there. And Nat and Ned say they'll come—going to stop with the Perritons.

You know—Abe Perriton is in college with my cousins."

"Good enough!" exclaimed Tavia. "Perhaps there'll be boys enough for once to 'go 'round.'"

"Oh!" exclaimed Dorothy, with twinkling eyes, "somebody else will be there, too."

"Who else? Joe and Roger?"

"I suppose they'll tease to come. And they can stay with their little friends just as I stay with you, and the big boys camp down on Abe's folks. But there is one other—Oh, Tavia! can't you guess?"

Tavia's cheeks had begun to burn and she shook her head firmly. "I don't care to know. Nobody in particular, of course," she said, with an impudent assumption of not caring.

"You *do* care," frowned Dorothy. "And you must guess. Ned just wrote me that he's sure to be in Dalton if *you* are there."

"The cheek of those boys!" observed Tavia, tossing her head.

"'B.N.,' " said Dorothy, teasingly.

"'B.N.'?" queried Tavia, with an elaborate air of not understanding. "Are you sure it isn't 'N.B.'? *That* means 'note well.'"

"It would never have happened if you hadn't noted him well in the first place," chuckled Dorothy. "You have chained him to your chariot wheels—you know you have—Pretty!" mur-

mured Dorothy, and, hugging her friend tightly, whispered in her burning ear:

"Bob Niles. You *know* he'll be there."

"Oh!" yawned Tavia, beginning to recover from her confusion. "*That* boy? Why, I had almost forgotten him."

"Fibber!" said Dorothy, pinching her.

"I really thought you meant the young brakeman on the train when we came over from New York," sighed Tavia, affectedly. "Wasn't he lovely?"

"You can't fool me, Tavia," declared her friend, laughing. "I don't believe you even remember the color of that railroad man's eyes."

"Blue—to match his uniform," said Tavia, smartly.

"Who ever heard of a Navy blue eye?" demanded Dorothy.

"Sure! wait till you get struck in the eye once; I *was*. And for a week before it turned yellow and green, it was the most be-you-ti-ful—Navy—blue——"

CHAPTER XVII

TAVIA TAKES A HAND

IT WAS a few days later that the *War Cry* arrived in the mail, for Dorothy. The young girl knew that the paper was widely circulated, and likewise that it was circulated among people who might know Tom Moran. Men of his trade, traveling about the country, often drop into Salvation Army meetings for very loneliness, if nothing more.

"Oh, I just hope he'll see it, and learn about how Celia wants him," said Dorothy, clasping her hands. "The poor little thing——"

"What do you s'pose Miss Olaine would say if she saw this notice?" interposed Tavia, after reading the blue-penciled paragraph.

"Miss Olaine?"

"Yes."

"I can't imagine why you say that," observed Dorothy, puzzled.

"Didn't I tell you how startled she was when she read Tom Moran's name on that postal card?"

"But nonsense, Tavia!" cried Dorothy. "That was because she was reminded of the awful fire in which she came so near to losing her life."

"How do you know?" snapped Tavia.

"But—my dear——"

"I tell you I believe she knows Tom Moran. Of course she would remember him, when he played the hero in that fire."

"It's ridiculous for you to talk that way, Tavia," declared Dorothy. "You always do go flying off on a tangent——"

"Then I get a free ride. Don't worry. I am welcome to my own 'idee'; am I not, Doro?"

"I suppose you are."

"Then I stick to it," said Tavia, with a toss of her head. "Olaine was startled because you were making inquiries about Tom Moran. Haven't I been watching her—'hout of me heagle heye,' as the Cockney villain says in the play——"

"You and your plays!" sniffed Dorothy. "Your romantic nature is working overtime again. I *do* wish you would make it behave."

But Tavia secretly held to her own belief. She, and not Dorothy, had observed Miss Olaine's emotion when she came across the postal card in the mail. Pooh! merely the remainder of that Rector Street School fire would not make the teacher look like *that*. You couldn't fool Tavia—at least, so she said in her heart.

She secured the copy of the Salvation Army paper when Dorothy was not near, and carried it into the recitation room in her blouse. Miss Olaine was more than usually severe that morning, and perhaps Tavia was thus encouraged to "spring" her little surprise, as she called it.

She made an excuse to go to the teacher's desk. She was not the only one who went there while Miss Olaine was at the blackboard, so the plotter did not think she would be suspected more than any of several other members of the class.

She laid the paper, with the page uppermost on which was printed the paragraph asking for news of Tom Moran, among the teacher's books. And surely Miss Olaine could not miss noticing that paragraph with the broad, blue pencil marks about it!

Tavia could not attend to the problem under discussion, her mind being centered upon what was going to happen when Miss Olaine got back to her desk. Therefore when the teacher shot a query at Tavia suddenly she made a woeful exhibition of herself.

"Inattention, Miss Travers. I will speak to you of that later," snapped Miss Olaine, striding back to her desk.

"Now she'll see it!" whispered Tavia to herself, scarcely minding the threatened black mark.

But Miss Olaine went on with her instructions

to the class, and did not see the paper. She sat there, looking out over the class, and Tavia began to wonder if ever she *would* drop her gaze and see that blue-penciled paragraph in the *War Cry* staring up at her.

Tavia really became so nervous that she could not follow the trend of the lesson at all. Once more Miss Olaine asked her a question, and the girl floundered most desperately and could not answer.

She could only think just then of Dorothy. Suppose Miss Olaine should accuse Dorothy of putting the paper there? Dorothy's name was on the label pasted upon the margin of the paper.

"You evidently have no interest in this recitation, Miss," said the teacher, sneeringly, when Tavia had made another lamentable exhibition of incompetence.

"Oh, yes, I have, ma'am," gasped Tavia.

"You may come to me after school this afternoon and explain, then, why you show so little interest now," declared the teacher.

Then her gaze dropped to the desk. She saw the paper, and Tavia saw that her attention was almost immediately fixed by the marked paragraph.

There was a sudden silence in the room. Of course, the other girls knew nothing about the interest Tavia had in what the teacher was read-

ing; but to her it seemed as though everything came to a standstill while Miss Olaine read and digested the paragraph.

She suddenly looked up and Tavia saw a deep flush come into her sallow cheek. She fumbled the paper, too, with shaking fingers. Her lips parted as though she were about to speak angrily.

Then the color left her face as though all the blood had been drained from her arteries in an instant! She sank back in her seat, with the back of her head against the chair.

"Oh! oh!" whispered Ned Ebony, who suddenly saw the teacher's condition.

Molly Richards was nearest, and she jumped up and ran to the platform. Tavia felt as though her own limbs were powerless. The girl realized that the teacher had fainted.

"Oh, dear me! whatever shall we do?" gasped Dick, chafing the teacher's hands.

"Run get some water—or some smelling salts!" cried Edna Black; but she never offered to go herself.

It was Dorothy who knew enough to act sensibly. When she looked up from her book and saw Miss Olaine's condition, she ran for the water at once and brought it to the desk. With her handkerchief she began to bathe the teacher's eyes and temples.

The paper was pushed off the desk into the

wastebasket. Nobody noticed this save Tavia. And she could barely stand up by her seat, she felt so weak.

The result of her experiment had shocked her quite as much as Miss Olaine. She was hovering on the edge of the group of excited and sympathetic girls when the teacher opened her eyes.

For a moment Miss Olaine stared about, confused and frightened. Then she put out both hands and pushed those nearest her away. Her hand clutched Dorothy's wrist and she suddenly glared into the latter's sympathetic eyes.

"What are you doing here?" she asked, thickly. "*Where is it?*"

She looked all around the desk. The color began to flood back into her face again and there could be no doubt but that the teacher was angry. She stared again at Dorothy.

"Go to your seat, Miss Dale. I—I shall look into—into this matter later. Go to your seat, instantly!"

"But—but, Miss Olaine——"

Dorothy was certainly amazed. The teacher, however, waved her away. "Immediately!" she gasped. "Or I shall report you to Mrs. Pangborn."

The other girls moved away, staring and surprised. Of course Dorothy took her seat; but

her face showed that she was both hurt and puzzled.

Tavia slipped into her own place, the *War Cry* hidden in her blouse. She had taken it out of the teacher's wastebasket when no one observed her. She was really frightened, now, by what she had brought about.

Dorothy was suspected, it was evident. Miss Olaine believed that the marked paper had been thrust under her eyes by the girl whose name and address were upon the margin.

Now, what would Miss Olaine do? What *could* she do, in fact? It really was a personal matter. She could not punish Dorothy very well for merely laying that paper on the desk.

So Tavia told herself. She had suddenly lost grip on her courage. Tavia was not usually a cowardly girl—not even morally.

But she shrank from explaining to the teacher. Something was gravely wrong with Miss Olaine, and it was connected with Tom Moran. It wasn't the mention of the Rector Street School fire that had "sent her off," as Tavia expressed it, on that former occasion, when Miss Olaine read Dorothy's postal card.

There was some reason for Miss Olaine to be disturbed by the mention of Tom Moran's name. Tavia had suspected it; but now she was sorry that she had gone to work to prove her suspicion!

"I've got myself into an awful mess again!" groaned Tavia, in spirit. "And I daren't tell Dorothy—not yet. She'd be *mad*."

"Of course, if old Olaine tries to punish Doro for what I've done—— Oh, she won't dare! I wonder what is the matter with her? And what she knows about that Tom Moran?"

"I—I wish I hadn't ever put my finger in the pie," sighed Tavia. "For certain sure it is most awfully burned—and serves me right."

She watched the teacher closely for the rest of the recitation hour. Miss Olaine seemed to be peering all about her desk for the paper, and she did not find it. Then she glared again at Dorothy.

"Oh, dear me!" groaned Tavia. "I've done a cruel and foolish thing, I am afraid. And I—I don't dare tell Doro about it!"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE RUNAWAY

"GOODNESS to gracious—and all hands around!"

"This is the muckiest, murkiest, most miserable, muddy day that ever was invented."

"Wish we could set it up somewhere and shoot at it with our popguns!"

"Hate to stay in the house, and it isn't any fun to go out."

"Can't—can't we play something?" urged Dorothy Dale, feebly, hearing her friends all blaming the weather for their own shortcomings. It was Saturday afternoon—the first real soft, spring day of the season. It *was* depressing.

"Ya-as," yawned Cologne. "Let's pla-a-ay—wow! That most dislocated my jaws, I declare!"

"Play 'cumjicum' or 'all around the mulberry bush,'" sniffed Edna Black. "You *do* think we are still kids; don't you, Doro?"

"I can't help it," returned Dorothy, smiling. "You act that way."

"Oh! listen to her! Villainess!" gasped Tavia, threatening her chum from the broad window sill of Number Nineteen with both clenched fists.

"Well, it isn't really *fitten* to go out, as Chloe, the colored maid, says," remarked Nita. "And what we shall really do with all this long afternoon and evening——"

"Let's have a sing," suggested Molly, passing around the last of a box of chocolate fudge she had made.

"Miss Olaine will stop us. She's got a headache and has retired to her den," said Dorothy, shaking her head.

"I tell you!" gasped Tavia, quickly. "Let's play a play—a real play. All dress up, and paint our faces—Ned shall be the hero, and we'll dress her up like a boy. And I'll be the adventuress—I really just *love* to play I'm wicked—for I never get a chance to be."

"You're wicked enough naturally. It would be more of a stunt for you to play the innocuous heroine—or the 'on-gi-nu,'" drawled Rose-Mary Markin.

"Oh! what an awful slap on the wrist!" cried Molly Richards.

"*Et tu, Brute?*" growled Tavia, in despairing accents.

"Now, what's the use?" again demanded Dorothy. "You know very well that Miss Olaine

will stop any fun that we start in the house."

"You admit her unfairness; do you, Miss?" cried Ned Ebony.

"She is perfectly outrageous of late!" gasped Dorothy.

"To you, too," groaned Cologne. "And no reason for it. You never did her any harm."

"Not that I know of," admitted Dorothy, sadly.

Tavia kept very still. She had no part in this discussion, but she felt "mean all over." She believed she could explain the sudden dislike Miss Olaine seemed to have taken to Dorothy Dale.

"If we hadn't all promised to treat her just as nice as we could——" began Molly.

"And we'll keep it up to the end of the term," said Dorothy, decidedly.

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Ned. "We'll be lady-like, be it ever so painful."

"It's easy," interposed Tavia, with a grin, "to be as polite as *she* is. Whatever is working on Olaine's mind——"

"It must be something awful. Nothing less than murder," declared Ned.

"And now it's begun to rain again," observed Cologne, gloomily.

"Just a mist," quoth Dorothy.

"Well! we could have *missed* it without crying about it. *Now* we can't go out at all," said Tavia, inclined to be snappy.

She turned to the window again. While the others were gabbling inconsequently, she stared off across the campus, already turning green, to the break in the tree-line where a considerable stretch of road could be seen plainly.

"Oh! the poor little kid!" she suddenly said.

"What's the matter now?" drawled Rose-Mary. "Is Sammy Bensell's goat on the rampage?"

"Goat? Who said anything about goat? What d'ye mean, goat?" demanded Tavia, without turning from the window.

"You said kid——"

"And it is! A little girl! Just see here, Doro!" cried Tavia, more energetically. "She's lost one of those big rubbers in the mud. There! there goes the other——"

Her chum ran to the window to look out and the others crowded up to peer over their shoulders. They all saw the little figure struggling along the muddy road toward the school gate. She had a hood on, and a bedrabbled-looking coat, and tried to carry a broken umbrella.

"The poor little thing!" murmured Cologne.

Dorothy suddenly uttered a cry, backed out of the group with energy, and dashed for the door.

"What is it?" gasped Ned Ebony, who had been almost overturned.

"*Who* is it?" added Tavia, herself bursting

through the group on the trail of her roommate.

"It's Celia—little Celia!" cried Dorothy, as she ran out of the room without hat, coat, or overshoes.

Tavia followed her. It was a race between them to the gateway of Glenwood. They got there just as the wind-blown and saturated figure of Mrs. Ann Hogan's little slave-of-all-work arrived at the open gateway.

"Oh, please!" shrilled the child's sweet voice, "is this the big school where my Miss Dorothy—— Oh, my dear Dorothy Dale!" she concluded, and ran sobbing into Dorothy's arms.

There was great confusion for the next few moments—not only at the gate, where Dorothy and Tavia took turns in hugging and quieting the sobbing child—but when they returned with Celia to the porch, where the other girls had gathered to satisfy their curiosity about the stranger.

"No," said Dorothy, decidedly; "you must not all talk at once. It bothers her. Tavia and I are going to take her to our room—— No! you can't all of you come. Go on about your business. By supper time Celia will be all right and you shall all get acquainted with her."

She picked the little girl up in her arms—oh, how thin the little body was!—and carried her all the way to Number Nineteen. Tavia "tagged"

closely, just as interested as she could be in the child.

"How did you get here, Celia?" demanded Dorothy, gravely, as she sat before the register, "skinning" off the little one's damp stockings, after Tavia had removed the worn shoes.

"I rode-ed part of the way," confessed Celia, nodding. "But Bentley didn't know about it. I hide-ed in the back of the wagon."

"My dear!" gasped Dorothy. "You ran away?"

"Bully!" murmured Tavia. "I love her for it."

"Hush!" commanded Dorothy; but Celia did not hear what Tavia said.

"Yes, Dorothy Dale, I jes' *had* to run away to see you. I jes' knowed I could find you."

"But Mrs. Hogan——"

"She—she wouldn't let me come," choked Celia. "I asked her. She said I wouldn't die if I didn't see you; but I knowed I *should* die," added the child, with confidence.

"Oh, my dear!" almost sobbed Dorothy.

"So I comed," said Celia, blandly smiling upon Dorothy and Tavia. "I hope you and your lady friend are glad to see me, Miss Dorothy?"

"Oh, aren't we—just!" murmured Tavia, under her breath.

"But I am afraid Mrs. Hogan will punish you," remarked Dorothy.

"Well," replied the philosophical infant, "she can't punish me before I see you—for I see you now, dear Dorothy Dale!" She laughed shrilly, threw her arms about the bigger girl's neck and clasped her hands tightly.

Tavia was delighted with the cunning little thing; she did not think of how seriously Celia might have to pay for her escapade.

"And to find her way here—all of eight miles!" she cried.

"The Morans is very, very smart," declared Celia, gravely, repeating what she had evidently heard older people say many times. "And when Jim Bentley turned off the straight road I slipped out of the cart behind, and I axed a man was *this* the road to the school, and he said yes, and so I comed."

"She must have walked a mile and a half at that!" cried Tavia. "She *is* a smart little thing. And how did you know *this* was the school, dear?"

"I didn't know—for sure," admitted Celia. "But it didn't look like houses, and it didn't look jes' like Findling asylums; so I 'spected it must be a school."

"And she never saw a school before!" cried Tavia.

"Oh, yes, Miss Dorothy's friend," said Celia,

demurely. "I went to school some when I was at the Findling. It was right on our block, and the matron let us big girls go," and the way she said that "big" Tavia declared was "just killing!"

"So you big girls went to school?" queried Tavia. "How far did you get in school, dear?"

"Oh—dear—me—let's see," said the little one, thoughtfully. "Why, I got as far as 'gozinto'—yes, that's it; we studied 'gozinto.'"

"'Gozinto'?" repeated Tavia, looking at Dorothy in wonder. "What under the sun does the child mean? Whoever heard of 'gozinto'?"

"Why, don't they study 'gozinto' here in this school?" queried the round eyed Celia. "You know, it's four gozinto eight twicet, an' three gozinto twelve four times, an' like that. It's re'l int'restin'," said the child, nodding.

"Oh! the funny little thing!" cried Tavia, bursting out laughing. "Did you ever hear the like of that, Dorothy?"

Dorothy was amused—as she had been before—by Celia's funny sayings; but she was interested more now in stripping off the child's poor garments—for she feared they were damp—and wrapping her in one of her own nightgowns.

"Now, you're going right into Dorothy's bed; aren't you, dear? And you'll go to sleep, and then we'll talk more afterward?"

Dorothy's motherly way pleased the wearied

child. "I'll do jes' what you say, Dorothy Dale," declared Celia. "But—but has you found Tom yet?"

"Not yet, dear; but I believe I am on the trail of him," declared Dorothy, softly.

Tavia turned her back quickly when the missing man was mentioned. She had never plucked up courage to tell her chum how she had put before Miss Olaine the printed paragraph about Tom Moran. Miss Olaine had never really punished Dorothy for Tavia's act; but since that time Tavia knew that the teacher had treated Dorothy more harshly than ever.

Tavia knew she had done wrong, but she did not know just how to straighten the matter out. To tell Dorothy would not help at all; and to broach the subject to Miss Olaine might do more harm than good.

The wearied child went to sleep almost as soon as her curly head touched Dorothy's pillow. The girls sat beside her and whispered their comments upon the incident, while the garments of little Celia dried at the register.

"That Mrs. Hogan will beat her; won't she?" demanded Tavia. "I'd like to beat *her*!"

"I don't know that the woman actually abuses her—not in that way. Celia doesn't seem to be afraid of being beaten."

"She's a plucky little thing."

"Yes, she doesn't cringe when Mrs. Hogan threatens to strike her. I noticed that when I stayed over night at the farmhouse," said Dorothy.

"But she isn't half fed," declared Tavia. "See how thin her little arms and legs are! It's a shame."

"I am afraid Celia doesn't have proper nourishment. She gets no milk nor eggs. Mrs. Hogan sells every pound of butter she makes, too. Now those things are just what a frail little thing like Celia needs. Mrs. Hogan is a female miser."

"A miserine—eh?" chuckled Tavia, who could not help joking even though so angry with the farm woman who half starved her little slavey.

"I must go down and tell Mrs. Pangborn about her," sighed Dorothy. "Otherwise there will be trouble."

"But we'll keep her till after supper—— Oh, do!" exclaimed Tavia, under her breath.

"I don't see how we can get her home to-night. Maybe Mrs. Pangborn can telephone to some neighbor who lives near that Hogan woman——"

Dorothy ran down to the school principal. Miss Olaine had retired to bed, it was understood, for the rest of the day, and Dorothy was glad. She wanted all the girls to see Celia at supper time, and "make much" of her.

Mrs. Pangborn called up Central and learned

the number of the nearest correspondent of the telephone company to the Hogan farm. There they took a message for the farm woman. Already the news had gone around the neighborhood that Mrs. Hogan's little girl was lost.

"But she is not likely to get 'way over here for her before morning," said the school principal. "I do not like that woman, Dorothy; and what you tell me about this child makes me fear that she is not a proper person to have charge of the little one."

"I am sure she isn't!" cried Dorothy. "If we could only find her brother," and she went on to relate to Mrs. Pangborn how she and Tavia had found out all about Tom Moran and the Rector Street School fire, and how the man had disappeared after rescuing the children and Miss Olaine from the burning building.

"Why, that is very interesting," said Mrs. Pangborn, after Dorothy had finished. "I must tell Miss Olaine about the child."

CHAPTER XIX

ANOTHER REASON FOR FINDING TOM MORAN

DOROTHY had freshened up little Celia's garments as well as she could while the child slept. She was handier with the needle than Tavia, although the latter had greatly improved in domestic science since those early days when she first began to take pattern of Dorothy, back in Dalton.

"Those shoes aren't fit for the child to wear," grumbled Tavia, who was helping to dress Celia when the warning bell for supper rang.

"Come on! Hurry up!" commanded Dorothy. "We're late now. Haven't you got her shoes on yet?"

"Yes, ma'am! all but one," responded Tavia.

"'All but one!' How many feet has the poor child got?" cried Dorothy. "You talk as though she were a centipede."

"She wriggles as though she had a hundred legs," panted Tavia. "Do be still, dearie—for a minute."

"Celia's full of wriggles," declared Dorothy. "Now come. Aren't you hungry, dear?"

"Oh-o-o! You jes' bet I am!" exclaimed Celia, running to the door ahead of her friends.

"Nice bread and milk for little girls—and plenty of it," promised Dorothy.

"Don't they haf to save the milk here at this school?" asked Celia, wonderingly. "Sometimes I get a little skimmed milk; but Mrs. Hogan says it pays best to give it to the hens and pigs."

"I suppose it does!" growled Tavia. "She can't sell little girls when they are fattened."

"Hush!" warned Dorothy, opening the door for the impatient Celia. "Now, wait and walk beside me—like a little lady."

The other girls were eager to see and speak with the little runaway. Miss Olaine being absent from her station at the head of the senior table, the classmates of Dorothy and Tavia hardly ate, watching Celia and listening to her prattle.

"She just *is* the cutest little thing that ever happened!" murmured Cologne.

Dorothy had placed Celia between herself and Tavia, and the little girl sat upon a dictionary borrowed from the principal's office. Celia had been neglected in many ways, one of which was in the niceties of etiquette. So Dorothy whispered to her to use her fork more frequently than she did a spoon, or her fingers—for there was something beside bread and milk for the little visitor.

"Ain't that funny?" cried Celia, in her shrill

voice. "I used to eat with my spoon, an' now you tell me to eat with my fork, Dorothy; how old must I be 'fore I eat with my knife—say?"

The upper class had the fun of Celia at table; but afterward she was borne off to the gym., where the whole school could entertain her.

Tavia took charge. The girls got into their gym. suits and an up-to-the-minute circus was arranged for the visitor's entertainment. There was "ground and lofty tumbling," clown tricks, jumping through hoops, Ned Ebony in tights and tinsel to represent the usual lady "bare-back rider," all the known ferocious beasts in chair-rung cages, with the labels displayed very prominently, including the "Gyrogustus" and the "Chrisomelaby-punktater"; and at last there was a splendid side show, with Cologne in a position of prominence as the \$10,000 Fat Beauty, Molly Richards as an Albino Twin, Nita as the Tatooed Lady, well disguised with red, blue and green chalk, and Tavia herself as the Bearded Lady, with so much black fringe on her face that she could scarcely talk.

Celia entered into the spirit of all the fun, appeared scared into fits by the roaring of the lions and the fierce appearance of the other astonishing animals; laughed at the antics of the clowns, was thrilled by the acrobatics, and wasn't quite sure that Nita's "tattooing" would really come off if you rubbed it!

The nine o'clock bell sent all hands scattering to their rooms. Perhaps Mrs. Pangborn had been more lenient than usual this evening; at least, none of the other teachers had interfered with the hilarity of the school in general—and the strict Miss Olaine was shut away in her room.

But as Dorothy and Tavia, bearing the sleepy Celia in a "chair" between them, passed the door of Miss Olaine's room, they saw Mrs. Pangborn come forth.

"Let me see your little friend, Dorothy," she said, hastily, and the chums stopped to introduce Celia Moran to the principal.

"So this is Tom Moran's little sister; is it?" Mrs. Pangborn said, patting the little girl's cheek.

"Do—do *you* know my brother, Tom Moran, ma'am?" asked Celia, sleepily. "He's big—an' he's got *such* red hair—and he builds bridges an' things——"

She almost nodded off to sleep. Mrs. Pangborn kissed her. "I have heard a good deal about Tom Moran—this evening," she said, and she looked significantly back at the door which she had just closed.

Tavia flashed a meaning look at Dorothy, and the moment the principal was out of the way, she whispered: "What did I tell you?"

"About what?" demanded Dorothy.

"About Miss Olaine and Tom Moran? She

knows something about him and she has been telling Mrs. Pangborn."

"Sh!" warned Dorothy. "If it was anything that might lead to his being found, she would have told me—surely."

"Who?"

"Mother Pangborn."

"Well, there's something queer about it," declared Tavia, nodding, "and Miss Olaine *knows*."

They put Celia to bed in Number Nineteen and some time after Dorothy had put out the light and crept in beside the little girl—Tavia was already asleep in her own bed—Dorothy heard a sound outside of the door.

Somebody was creeping along the corridor. Was it some teacher on the watch for some infraction of the rules? Dorothy had heard nothing of a "spread-eagle" affair on this corridor to-night.

The step stopped. Was it at this door? For some moments Dorothy lay, covered to her ears, and listened.

Then to her surprise she knew that the door was open. It was the draft from the window that assured her of this fact. The door was opened wider and a tall figure, dimly visible because of the light in the hall, pushed into the room.

The lock clicked faintly as the knob was released by the marauder's hand. Dorothy was half-frightened at first; then she *knew* there could be

nobody about the building who would hurt her.

The visitor moved toward her bed. Peeping carefully, but continuing to breathe in the same regular fashion that Tavia did, Dorothy watched the shadowy form draw near.

It was a woman, for whoever it was had on a long woollen dressing gown. But the face and head were in complete shadow, and at first Dorothy had no idea as to the person's identity.

The woman came close to the foot of the bed and stood there for several minutes. Dorothy began to feel highly nervous—she really thought she should scream. Not that she was afraid as yet; but the strange actions of the Unknown——

Ah! now she was moving nearer. She was coming alongside—between Tavia's and Dorothy's beds. Celia was on that side, and Dorothy was about to put her arm protectingly over the child.

Then she feared the visitor would suspect that *she* was not asleep. And if she was frightened off, Dorothy might not learn who it was.

So the girl kept very still, continuing to breathe deeply and regularly. The woman stooped closer and closer. It was over Celia that she bent, and Dorothy saw her hand steal out to draw the sheet farther back from the child's face.

Then Dorothy knew suddenly who it was. She recognized the long, clawlike hand; and the pecu-

liar ring upon the third finger—the engagement finger—fully identified Miss Olaine!

Dorothy had often noted that ring on the strange teacher's hand. Miss Olaine had come creeping into the room, supposing all the girls to be asleep, just to see Celia Moran!

There could be no doubt but that Miss Olaine had some deep interest in the Morans—in both Tom and Celia. Tavia had suggested such a thing; but really Dorothy had not believed it before Mrs. Pangborn spoke as she did on this evening as the girls were coming up to bed with Celia.

The queer teacher bent down and peered into the face of the unconscious child. A glance at Dorothy seemed to have satisfied her that the latter was asleep. All her interest was centered in the little child who had run away from her hard task-mistress.

She stooped lower. Dorothy saw that Miss Olaine's face was tear-streaked and her eyes were wet. She bent near, breathing softly, and touched her lips to the pale forehead of little Celia.

Then Miss Olaine rose up quickly and stole away from the bed again. Dorothy almost forgot to breathe steadily. She was amazed and excited by the actions of the teacher who, heretofore, had seemed so hard-hearted.

There certainly was what Tavia would have called a "soft streak" in Miss Olaine. Dorothy

was sure that she heard her sobbing as the teacher opened the door quietly again and stole out.

What did it mean? Had Miss Olaine a personal interest in the little girl from the "Findling asylum"—the little lost sister of Tom Moran?

Evidently Mrs. Pangborn had told her assistant of the presence in the school that night of little Celia. Miss Olaine must have a deeper interest in Tom Moran than the incident of the school building fire two years before would suggest.

It was a big mystery—a puzzle that Dorothy could not fathom, though she lay awake a long time trying to do so. Here was another reason for finding the missing man. Dorothy could not help pitying Miss Olaine, although the teacher had treated her so harshly for a fortnight or more.

"Just as Mrs. Pangborn says, we have reason to excuse her harshness," thought Dorothy, as usual willing and ready to excuse other people. "And I'd just love to be the one to clear all the trouble up both for Miss Olaine and little Celia.

"Finding Tom Moran will bring Celia happiness, I am sure. Now, would finding him bring happiness to Rebecca Olaine, as well?"

Early in the morning Mrs. Ann Hogan made her appearance at Glenwood School. But Dorothy and Tavia had got Celia up betimes, and the three had had their breakfast before the regular breakfast hour. Tavia always knew how to "get

around the cook " and did about as she pleased with that good soul.

" We'll just fill Celia up as tight as a little tick," declared Tavia, " before that ogress carries her off to her castle again. Oh, Dorothy! do you suppose that horrid thing will *beat* poor little Celia?"

" I am sure Mrs. Pangborn will 'tend to that matter," Dorothy said.

And Mrs. Pangborn did ask Mrs. Hogan into her office before she had Celia brought in by the girls. It was evident that the dignified school principal had spoken much to the point to the red-faced Mrs. Hogan, for the latter was both subdued and nervous when Celia appeared.

" Celia has certainly done wrong in coming here to find you, Dorothy," said Mrs. Pangborn, quietly. " I hope you said nothing to her which encouraged her to run away?"

" Oh, no, indeed, Mrs. Pangborn!" said Dorothy, while Celia clung tight about her neck and looked fearfully at her taskmistress.

" Then Mrs. Hogan knows that it was just the child's longing for you that brought her here."

" Sure, the little plague has been talkin' about Miss Dale all the time since she was wid us for the week-end," grumbled Mrs. Hogan. " Come here, Cely. I'll not chastise ye this time—but if there's another——"

" I am sure there is no need of threatening

her," interposed Mrs. Pangborn. "Come, Celia!"

The little one unclasped her hands lingeringly from about Dorothy's neck.

"Oh, I'll find some way to see you again, Dorothy Dale," she whispered. "For you know they all say——"

"You be good, and I'll come to see you," declared Dorothy.

"And so will I," cried Tavia, almost in tears.

"Yes. You both come. It—it won't be so bad if I can see you now and then," sighed Celia. "And you'll find Tom Moran?"

"Have done with that foolishness now!" exclaimed Mrs. Hogan. "She goes on about that brother av hern foriver. Ye'll niver see him again, my gur-r-rl."

"Oh, yes, she shall!" cried Dorothy Dale. "Don't you fear, Celia. I shall find him for you."

Then Mrs. Hogan bore the little one off to her wagon, and they drove away. It made Dorothy and Tavia feel very sad to see the cute little thing go off in such a way.

"I am sure that woman abuses her!" cried Tavia.

"Oh, we will hope not. But if only Tom Moran would re-appear," sighed Dorothy, "all her troubles would vanish in smoke."

CHAPTER XX

BACK TO DALTON

"DALTON! Dalton! Hurrah!"

"Look out—do, Tavia! You'll be out of the window next."

"No, I won't. That isn't the very *next* thing I'm going to do."

"What is 'next,' then?"

"Going to hug you!" declared Tavia, and proceeded to put her threat into execution, smashing Dorothy's hat down over her eyes, and otherwise adding to the general "mussed-up condition" resulting from the long journey from Glenwood to the town which was still Tavia's home, and for which Dorothy would always have a soft spot in her heart.

"Oh, dear me!" gasped Tavia. "It is ~~so~~ delightful, Doro Doodlebug, to have you really going home with me to stay at my house for two whole weeks. It is too good to be true!" and out of the window her head went again, thrust forth far to see the station the train was approaching.

Dorothy made another frantic grab at her skirt.

"Do be careful! You'll knock your silly head off on a telegraph pole."

"No loss, according to the opinion of all my friends," sighed Tavia. "Do you know the latest definition of 'a friend'? It's a person who stands up for you behind your back and sits down on you *hard* when you are in his company."

The brakes began to grind and Tavia put on her hat and grabbed her hand baggage.

"Dear old Dalton," whispered Dorothy, looking through the window with a mist in her eyes. "What good times we had here when we **were** just—just children!"

"Dead oodles of fun!" quoth Tavia. "Come on, Doro. You'll get carried past the station and have to walk back from the water-tank."

But Dorothy was ready to leave in good season. And when the girls got off the train who should meet them but three smartly-dressed youngsters who proceeded to greet them with wild yells and an Indian war dance performed in public on the station platform.

"Oh, Johnny!" gasped Tavia, capturing her own young brother.

"And Joe and Roger!" cried Dorothy. "How did you boys get here ahead of us? Aren't you the dears?"

"School closed two days earlier than usual,"

explained Joe Dale, who was now almost as tall as Dorothy and a very manly-looking fellow.

"Don't kiss me so much on the street, sister," begged Roger, under his breath. "Folks will see."

"And what if?" demanded Dorothy, laughing.

"They'll think I'm a *little* boy yet," said Roger.

"And you know I'm *not*."

"No. You are no longer Dorothy's baby," sighed the girl. "She's lost her two 'childers'."

"Never mind, Sis," sympathized Joe. "You were awful good to us when we were small. We sha'n't forget our 'Little Mum' right away; shall we, Rogue?"

"Is *that* what the other boys call him at school?" demanded Dorothy, with her arm still around the little fellow.

"Yep," laughed Joe. "And he *is* a rogue. You ought to heard him in class the other day. Professor Brown was giving a nature lesson and he asked Rogue, 'How does a bee sting?' and Roger says, 'Just awful!' What do you think of that?"

"A graduate of the school of experience," commented Tavia. "Come on, now, folks. Joe and Roger are staying at our house, too—for a while."

She started off, arm in arm with her own brother, and Dorothy followed with Joe and Roger, the boys carrying all "the traps," as Johnny called the baggage.

The present home of the Travers family was

much different from that home as introduced to my readers in "Dorothy Dale: A Girl of To-day"; for although Mrs. Travers would never be a model housekeeper, the influence of Tavia was felt in the home even when she was away at school.

Mr. Travers, too, had succeeded in business and was not only an officer in the town, and of political importance, but he was interested in a construction company, and the family was prospering.

Mrs. Travers realized the help and stimulation Dorothy had given to Tavia, and she welcomed her daughter's friend very warmly. Tavia "took hold" immediately and straightened up the house and seized the reins of government. Tavia was proud and she did not wish Dorothy to see just how "slack" her mother still was in many ways.

Her own dainty room she shared with Dorothy; and while the latter was going about, calling on old friends, during the first two days, Tavia worked like a Trojan to make the whole house spick and span.

"It's worth a fortune to have you around the house again, Daughter," declared Mr. Travers.

"All right, Squire," she said, laughingly giving him his official title. "When I get through at Glenwood I reckon I'll have to be your housekeeper altogether—eh?"

"And will you be content to come home and **stay**?" he asked her, pinching the lobe of her ear.

"Why not?" she demanded, cheerfully.

"But if Dorothy goes to college——?"

"I can't have Dorothy always. I wish I could," sighed Tavia. "But I know, as Grandma Potter says, 'Every tub must stand on its own bottom.' I have got to learn to get along without Dorothy *some time*."

But that night, when she and her chum had gone to bed, she suddenly put both arms around Dorothy and hugged her—*hard*.

"What is it, dear?" asked Dorothy, sleepily.

"Oh, dear Dorothy Dale!" whispered Tavia.

"I hope we marry twins—you and I. Then we needn't be separated—much."

"Marry twins? Mercy!"

"I mean, each of us a twin—twins that belong together," explained Tavia. "Then *we* needn't be so far apart."

"What a girl you are, Tavia!" laughed Dorothy, kissing her. "Why, we won't have to think about the possibility of our having a chance to be married——"

"Mercy!" chuckled Tavia, recovering herself.

"*What* an elongated sentence you're fixin' up."

"Where—where was I?" murmured Dorothy.

"Never mind, Doro. The man who marries either of us will have to agree to let us live right next door to each other. Isn't that right?"

"Oh, more than that," agreed Dorothy.

"He'll have to agree that we shall be together most of the time anyway. But don't worry. I think seriously of being a she philanthropist, and of course no man will want to marry me then."

"And I'll be a—a policewoman—or a doctress," gasped Tavia. "Either job will drive 'em away."

"And — Bob — is — coming — to-morrow," yawned Dorothy, and the next minute was asleep.

Before the boys came, however, Dorothy and Tavia went to see Sarah Ford. And it was on the way back that they had their adventure with the ox-cart. Of course, it was Tavia's fault; but the young man driving the oxen had such a good-natured smile, and such red hair, and so many freckles——

"No use!" Tavia declared. "I felt just like going up to him on the spot and calling him 'brother.' I know the boys must always have called him 'Bricktop,' or 'Reddy'—and I'm Reddy's brother, sure," touching her own beautiful ruddy hair. "How I *did* hate to be called 'Carrots' when I went to Miss Ellis's school, Doro."

But this isn't the story of the ox-cart ride. The cart was full of hay—up to the high sides of it. There were a couple of bags of feed, too.

"Oh, I ought to know him," Tavia assured Dorothy. "He's working for my father. I remember the old cart. They are digging away the top of Longreach Hill. Say! couldn't we ride?"

"Of course, Miss," said the red-headed and good-natured young man. "Whaw, Buck! Back, Bright!" He snapped his long whiplash in front of the noses of the great black steers. They stopped almost instantly, and in a moment Tavia wriggled herself in upon the hay from behind, and gave her hand to Dorothy to help her in, too.

"Oh! isn't this fun?" gasped Tavia, snuggling down in the sweet-smelling hay, while the span of big beasts swung forward on the road again.

"We're too big to play at such games, I s'pose," said Dorothy, but her friend interrupted with:

"Wait, for mercy's sake, till we're graduated. I'm afraid you're going to be a regular *poke* before long, Doro. Ugh! wasn't that a thank-you-ma'am? Just see their broad backs wag from side to side. Why! they're as big as elephants!"

"Suppose they should run away?" murmured Dorothy.

But neither believed that was really possible. Only, it was deliciously exciting to think of careening down the hill behind the great steers, with no red-headed young man to snap his whip and cry:

"Hawther, Bright! Come up, Buck!"

On the brow of Longreach Hill the red-headed young man stopped the oxen. It was a steep pitch just before them—then a long slant to the shallows of the river—quite half a mile from the hill-top to the river's edge.

Somebody shouted and beckoned the driver of the oxen away before he could help the girls out of the cart.

"Wait a moment, ladies," he begged, with a smile, and hurried to assist in the moving of a heavy slab of rock.

It was then three youths came running out of the grove, waving their hats and sticks.

"Oh, look who has come !" cried Tavia, seizing Dorothy's arm.

"Ned and Nat—and there's Bob, of course," laughed Dorothy. "What did I tell you, lady?"

A dog ran behind the boys—a funny, long bodied, short-legged dog. He cavorted about as gracefully as an animated sausage.

"Look at the funny dog?" gasped Tavia, immediately appearing to lose her interest in the three collegians. "Is that a dachshund? Oh-o-o!"

Her scream was reasonable. The dog leaped in front of the steers' noses. The huge creatures snorted, swung the cart-tongue around, and lurched forward down the steep descent!

The girls could not get out then. The road was too rocky. The oxen were really running away. Their tails stiffened out over the front board of the cart and the cart itself bounded in the air so that the passengers could only cling and scream.

They were having quite all the excitement even Tavia craved, thank you!

CHAPTER XXI

"THAT REDHEAD"

"To LOOK at those beasts," Tavia said, ruefully, and some time after the event, "you wouldn't think they could run at all."

Certainly a pair of steers tipping the scales at a ton and a half each did not look like racing machines. But they proved to be that as they thundered down hill.

Had one of them fallen on the way we shrink from thinking of the result—to the two girls in the cart. The long, lingering dog that had started the trouble was left far behind. The three collegians who had come over the hill to surprise the girls, could not gain a yard in the race. As for "that redhead" who had governed the steers before they ran, he just missed the rear of the cart and he followed it down the steep grade with an abandon that was worthy of a better end.

For he couldn't catch it; and had he been able to, what advantage would it have given him?

When a span of steers wish to run away, and decide upon running away, and really get into ac-

tion, nothing but a ten-foot stone wall will stop them. And there was no wall at hand.

The great wheels bounced and the cart threatened to turn over at every revolution of the wheels; Tavia screamed intermittently; Dorothy held on grimly and hoped for the best.

The steers kept right on in a desperately grim way, their tails still stiffened. They reached the bottom of the hill and were at the very verge of the sloping bank into the shallows of the river.

A suicidal mania seemed to have gained possession of their bovine minds. They cared nothing for themselves, for the wagon, or for the passengers in that wagon. Into the river they plunged. The wabbling cart rolled after them until the water rose more than hub high.

And then the oxen halted abruptly, both lowered their noses a little, *and both began to drink!*

"Such excitement over an old drink of water!" gasped Tavia, and then fell completely into the hay and could not rise for laughing.

"Do—do you suppose they ran down here—like *that*—just to get a drink?" demanded Dorothy. "Why—why I was scared almost to death!"

"Me, too; we could have been killed just as easy, whether the oxen were murderously inclined or as playful as kittens. Ugh! that redhead!"

"It wasn't his fault," said Dorothy.

"He never should have left us alone with them."

"It was that dog did it," declared Dorothy.

"Don't matter who did it. The dog *was* funny enough looking to scare 'em into fits," giggled Tavia. "Here he comes again. Oh, I hope the oxen don't see him."

"Yet you blame the young man with the—light hair," hesitated Dorothy. "Here he comes now."

The excited young man with the flame-colored tresses was ahead of the three collegians. He leaped right into the water and called to the girls to come to the back of the cart.

"'Tis no knowing when them ugly bastes will take it inter their heads to start ag'in," he declared, holding his strong arms to Dorothy. "Lemme carry ye ashore out o' harm's way, Miss."

Dorothy trusted herself to him at once. But the boys were not to be outdone in this act of gallantry—at least, one of them was not. Bob Niles rushed right into the water and grabbed Tavia, whether she wanted to be "rescued" or not.

"Bob, my dear boy," said Tavia, in her most grown-up manner, "don't stub your poor little piggy-wiggies and send us both splash into the water. *That* would be too ridiculous."

"I shall bear you safely ashore, Tavia—no fear," he grunted. "Whew! You've been putting on flesh, I declare, since New Year's," he added.

"Pounds and pounds," she assured him. "Now, up the bank, little boy."

Dorothy was already deposited in safety and her cousins were taking their turns in "saluting her on both cheeks;" but when Bob tried to take toll from Tavia in that way she backed off, threatening him with an upraised hand.

"You are no cousin—make no mistake on that point, sir," she declared.

"Huh! I ought to have some reward for saving you from a watery grave," said Bob, sheepishly.

"Charge it, please," lisped Tavia. "There are *some* debts I never propose to pay till I get ready."

But she, like Dorothy, was unfeignedly glad to see the three young men again. While they chattered with Ned, and Nat, and Bob, the red-haired young man got his oxen and the cart out of the river and guided the animals back toward the hill.

There came on a dog-trot from the scene of the excavating operations a fat, puffy man, who snatched the whip out of redhead's hand and proceeded to administer a tongue lashing, part of which the girls and their companions overheard.

"Oh! he doesn't deserve that," said Dorothy, mildly. "It wasn't his fault."

"He shouldn't have left us alone in the cart," pouted Tavia. "That's Mr. Simpson, one of father's foremen. Let him be. A scolding never killed anybody yet—otherwise, how would I have survived Olaine this term?"

Dorothy was not quite satisfied, but she was overborne by her companions to go back to town and so did not see the end of the controversy between the foreman and "That Redhead" as Tavia insisted on calling the ox-team driver. Besides, Tavia acknowledged a cut she had received on her arm by being banged about in the ox-cart.

"You'd better hurry home and put some disinfectant on it," advised Nat, who always had serious interest in Tavia's well-being.

"Huh!" said Tavia, hotly, "I'm not a kitchen sink, I hope. If you mean antiseptic, say so."

"Wow!" cried Ned. "Our Tavia has become a purist."

"Oh, dear, that's worse!" declared Tavia. "Come on, Doro, I don't like these boys any more. I am going to become a man-hater, anyway, I think. They're always underfoot—— Oh! what a cute dog you've got, Ned."

"'Taint mine," said Ned. "It's Nat's."

"But he seems a long way from his head to his tail for a short-legged beast," observed Dorothy.

"That's some dog, let me tell you," Nat declared, stoutly. "He's a real German dachshund."

"I thought he looked like an animated sausage," declared Tavia, stooping to pet the animal. The creature stood very still while she patted his sleek coat, only blinking his big, soft brown eyes.

"He isn't very sociable, I don't think," grumbled Tavia.

"Of course he is," said Nat. "He's as good-natured as he can be."

"How are you going to tell? He doesn't wag his tail when you pat him on the head—see there!"

"Aw, give him time," laughed Ned. "Don't you know it takes a dachshund several minutes to transmit ecstasy along the line to the terminus?"

They went along to Tavia's house gaily. The boys remained to supper, and it was only after that comfortable meal, and while the boys were in Mr. Travers' "office," where he smoked his evening pipe, the girls being busy clearing the table and washing dishes, that Nat sang out:

"Hi, Doro! did you hear about your redhead?"

"What about him?" cried Dorothy and Tavia.

"Mr. Travers says he got the G. B. after letting those oxen run away."

"Oh, never!" cried Tavia, coming to the door.

"You were sore on him yourself, Tavia," reminded Bob Niles.

"But you didn't discharge him, Father?" questioned the tender-hearted girl.

"No. It was Simpson. But I could not very well interfere," said Mr. Travers.

"Why not? It wasn't fair!" urged Tavia.

"I am sure Simpson knows best. Though I liked Tom," said her father. "I cannot interfere

between the foreman and the men. If I did I'd soon have neither overseers nor workmen, but a strike on my hands," and he laughed.

"I think it is too bad, sir," said Dorothy, grave-
were run away with."

ly. "Really, it was not his fault at all that we

"He left you alone with the beasts," Ned declared.

"He was called by those other men to help," Tavia retorted.

"Well, he's gone, I fear," said Mr. Travers, shaking his head.

"Not out of town, father?"

"I reckon so. Tom comes and goes. He is a good man, although he's young; but he's unsettled. Lots of these workmen are. They go from place to place. He is fit to take charge himself, I believe, of a steel construction gang; but, as the boys say, 'something got his goat.' He doesn't work at his trade any more. It is a dangerous trade, and he probably had an accident——"

"Steel construction—bridge building, do you mean, sir?" asked Dorothy, suddenly.

"Why, yes—I suppose so."

"And he is red-haired!" gasped Dorothy.

"Oh, what's his name, Mr. Travers?"

"Tom Moran; he's worked for me before——"

"Oh, Doro!" cried Tavia.

"Oh, Tavia!" echoed Dorothy.

CHAPTER XXII

ON THE TRAIL

"IT SEEMS almost impossible that a man with *such* a red head could so completely drop out of sight," sighed Tavia the next day.

The boys had just combed Dalton "with a fine-toothed comb" for the elusive Tom Moran, and had bagged nothing. He had gone—vamoosed—disappeared—winked out; all these synonyms were Tavia's. The girls had discussed the disappearance until there seemed nothing more to be said.

"We don't really know that he *was* Celia's big brother," said Dorothy, reflectively. "But it seems very probable. Even your father knew that he was a bridge builder."

"But we didn't," snapped Tavia. "Who expected to find a structural ironworker driving a yoke of steers?"

"And *such* steers," sighed Dorothy, for she had scarcely gotten over the scare of that perilous ride.

Everybody about town knew by this time that

the red-haired young man who had worked in Simpson's gang was wanted by Dorothy Dale. Dorothy had more friends in Dalton than anywhere else. Indeed, she could well claim every respectable member of the community, save the nursing babies, as her own particular friend.

With so many people on the lookout for a trace of Tom Moran, therefore, it was no wonder that Dorothy and her friends were running down possible clues all day long.

The second morning news came from a farmer out on the Fountainville Road. Ned and Nat had come down to Dalton in their *Firebird*, and they got the motorcar out of the garage at once and brought it around to give the girls a ride to Farmer Prater's house.

"He's been losing chickens," said Ned, as they all scrambled in. "And he telephoned in something about a red-headed man he had hired, named Moran, having a fight in the night with a band of chicken thieves in an automobile. What do you know about *that?*"

"Sounds crazy enough," said Tavia, tartly.

"All right. Your father's sent a constable out to see about it, just the same. And there aren't two red-headed men named Moran wandering about the county, I am sure."

"But I don't believe Celia's brother would rob a henroost," said Dorothy.

"Oh, fudge!" exclaimed Nat. "Listen to the girl? Who said he *did*?"

"Well! wasn't there something about chicken stealing in what Ned said? Oh! I almost lost my hat that time. *What* a jolty road."

"Look out or you'll lose your name and number both on this stretch of highway. Can't the old *Firebird* spin some?"

"Such flowers of rhetoric," sighed Tavia. "'Spin some' is beautiful."

"Lots you know about flowers of any kind, Miss Travers," teased Nat.

"I know all about flowers—especially of speech," returned Tavia, tossing her head. "I can even tell you the favorite flowers of the various States and countries——"

"England?" shouted Nat.

"Primroses," returned Tavia, promptly, unwilling to be caught.

"France?" questioned Bob.

"Lilies."

"Scotland?" asked Dorothy, laughing.

"Ought to be a beard of oats, but it's the thistle," said Tavia, promptly.

"Ireland?" demanded Ned, without turning from his steering wheel.

"Shamrock, of course."

"Got you!" ejaculated Nat. "What's Spain's favorite?"

"Oh—oh—oh—— Bulrushes, I s'pect," said Tavia, having the words jolted out of her. "Bull-fights, anyway. Dear, dear me! we might as well travel over plowed ground."

They struck a better automobile road on the Fountainville turnpike, and before long they came in sight of Farmer Prater's house. Oddly enough there was a gray and yellow automobile under one of the farmer's sheds.

The farmer was in high fettle, it proved, and willing enough to talk about the raid the night before on his pens of Rhode Island reds.

"Jefers pelters!" he chortled. "I got me pullets back and the ortermerbile ter boot. D'ye see it? That's what the raskils come in."

"Not the red-headed man?" demanded Tavia.

"Who said anything about a red headed—— Oh! you mean Tom Moran?" asked Mr. Prater. "Why, *he* warn't with 'em. If it hadn't been for him them raskils would ha' got erway with my pullets—ya-as, sir-ree-sir!"

"Where is Tom?" demanded Dorothy.

But Mr. Prater had to tell the story in his own way. And it was an exciting one—to him! He had been awakened in the early hours of the morning and had seen an automobile standing in the road. Then he heard a squawking in the chicken pens. He had valuable feathered stock, and he got up in a hurry to learn what was afoot.

But the thieves would have gotten well away with their bags of feathered loot had it not been for Tom Moran, who was sleeping for the night in Farmer Prater's barn.

"That red-headed feller is as smart as a steel trap," said the farmer, admiringly. "I've been at him every time I'm in Dalton to come an' work for me. But he wouldn't."

"What did he do?" asked Dorothy, interested for more reasons than one in any account of Tom Moran.

"Why, he jumped out of the hay, got ahead of the thieves, and leaped into their merchine before they reached it. It's a self-starter—d'ye see? So he jest teched up the engine button, and started the merchine to traveling. Them fellers couldn't git aboard, and they had to drop the sacks and run. I was right behind 'em with my gun, ye see, and I'd peppered 'em with rock salt if they hadn't quit as they did—— Ya-as, sir-ree-sir!"

"And where did Tom go?" queried Tavia, breathlessly.

"Why, he brought the machine back, eat his breakfast, and went on his way. He didn't say where he was goin'. I'll wait for the owner of the ortermobile to show up an' explain about his car, I reckon. Ain't no license number on it."

So *that* settled this trace of Tom Moran. He had disappeared again. Nobody near Mr. Prater

had observed the red-headed man when he left for parts unknown. The girls and their friends had lots of fun scouring the neighboring country in the *Firebird*; but the young man whom Dorothy Dale wished to see so very much was as elusive as a will-o'-the-wisp!

And when they got back to town there was a letter about the very man himself addressed to the *War Cry* office, in regard to the advertisement that Dorothy had caused to be printed in that paper. The letter had gone to Glenwood and been forwarded to Dalton on Dorothy's trail.

The letter was written on dirty paper and in a handwriting that showed the writer to be a very ignorant person. And it was actually mailed in Dalton! The girls read it eagerly.

"If you want to knos bout Tom Moran I can tell you all you want to knos. but I got a be paid for what I knos. hes a many mils from here. but I can find him if its mad wuth my wile. So no mor at present Well wisher. p. s.—rite me at Dalton N. York, name john Smith. Ile get it from genl dlivry."

"Now, never in the world did that red-haired young man write such a letter, Doro!" cried Tavia.

"Of course not. It is some bad person who saw

the advertisement and thinks that some money is to be made out of poor Celia's brother."

"And this awful scrawl was written when Tom was right here in town."

"Certainly," agreed Dorothy.

"Yet the writer says he is 'a many miles from here.'"

"That is why we may be sure that the person writing to me has a very bad mind and is trying to get money. I am sure Tom Moran never saw the notice in the *War Cry* and that he knows nothing about this letter," repeated Dorothy.

"Dear me! to be so close on the trail of that redhead—and then to lose him," Tavia said despairingly.

"Perhaps this person who wrote the letter knows where he is now. Yes, it looks reasonable," said Dorothy, reflectively. "You see, believing as he does that somebody will pay money to find Tom Moran, he will likely keep in touch with Celia's brother."

"I see!" cried Tavia. "I see what you are driving at. Aren't you smart, Doro Dale? The way to do, then, is for us to find this John Smith—— But how will you do it?"

"How?"

"Of course that isn't his name. I don't believe there is a John Smith in Dalton."

"Perhaps not. Although John Smiths aren't

uncommon," laughed Dorothy. "But we know that is the name in which he'll ask for his mail. Now, why not keep watch——"

"Better than that!" gasped Tavia. "Let's tell Mr. Somes, the postmaster, and have him set a watch upon whoever gets a letter for John Smith."

"But where'll he get a letter—if I don't write him?" demanded Dorothy.

"Of course, you'll write him. Write now. Make him think you are going to 'bite' on his offer."

"But I don't intend to pay any great sum for finding Tom Moran—though I'd be willing to if I had it."

"We can fool him; can't we?" demanded Tavia. "He is evidently trying to over-reach Tom and you both. Let the biter be bitten," said Tavia, gaily. "Come on, Doro! Write the letter."

CHAPTER XXIII

ALMOST CAUGHT

"My!" exclaimed Tavia, later. "There is a whole lot to making up a plot; isn't there? And how wise you are, Doro!"

"But you see, my child, you can't go ahead with this scheme as you first mapped it out," observed Dorothy, drily.

"Oh, I see," agreed her friend. "Mr. Some can't arrest the man who calls himself 'John Smith.'"

"Of course not. Nor can anybody else arrest him. He has committed no crime in trying to get money for his information about Tom Moran."

"But how will you fix him?"

"You see, if Mr. Some will allow the clerk at the general delivery window of the post-office to make some signal when a person comes to call for this letter I have written, we will have somebody on the watch to follow John Smith. Then we'll find out who he is——"

"If it is a 'he,'" interposed Tavia.

"Of course it is," returned her friend. "It's a man's handwriting. And a very bad, ignorant man, I am afraid."

"He doesn't belong to Dalton, then," declared Tavia, earnestly. "Since the liquor crusade, when the saloons were all shut, we haven't had many men of bad character in Dalton."

"That's right," agreed Dorothy. "But you see, there is always a 'floating population.' Work such as your father's company is doing brings in irresponsible men from outside. They have no interest in the fair name of Dalton, so we mustn't be surprised if they misbehave," said sensible Dorothy.

"But who is going to watch all the time at the post-office?" demanded Tavia.

"The window for the delivery of letters is open from eight till eight. We'll get the boys to help us take turns. There are you and me, Johnny, Joe and Roger—even Roger isn't too little to follow the man and find out where he lives," said Dorothy, briskly. "Then we can pull my cousins, and Bob Niles, and Abe Perriton into it. That makes nine of us. Nine in twelve hours——What does nine in twelve make, Tavia?"

"One hour and twenty minutes each—*about*. Oh, all right!" exclaimed Tavia. "Of course we can watch. But the question is: Will that do any good?"

Dorothy would not listen to any croaking. She wrote the decoy letter, and the two girls went down town and saw Mr. Somes privately. He knew both Tavia's father and Major Dale; and when the girls from Glenwood disclosed to the postmaster just why they wished to find Tom Moran, and all about Celia, and the letter Dorothy had received from "John Smith," he agreed to help them.

It was arranged, however, that the letter should not be put in the mail until the following morning, so that the girls might fully arrange the "watch-and-watch" on the general delivery letter window.

Their boy friends fell into the scheme with alacrity. Dorothy and Tavia did not explain entirely their interest in Tom Moran, nor why there was such a hue and cry after that red-haired young man; but——

"It doesn't matter," said one of the lads, cheerfully. "If Dot says she wants to find the chap—and this fellow who wrote the bum letter—we'll do just what she says. Dot's all right, you know, fellows!"

But that very morning there came word over the telephone to Abe Perriton's house that started the excitement in a new quarter. A man named Polk, who ran a sawmill on Upper Creek, asked Mr. Perriton to hire several men in Dalton if he

could, as he had work that must be rushed and he needed an extra force of hands.

"And I haven't been able to hire a soul up here, except Tom Moran, who came along last night. And I'm afraid he won't stay. He'll not promise to."

"Here, Abe," said Mr. Perriton. "Didn't I hear something about your friends wanting to see Tom Moran? He's up to Polk's mill."

That was enough. The boys started with the *Firebird* inside of ten minutes picking up Dorothy and Tavia on the way. But nobody thought to telephone to the mill man to ask him to hold the red-haired man until the *Firebird* party arrived.

It was over another rough road to Polk's mill on Upper Creek. "Dear, dear," complained Tavia, "I am half in doubt whether the geographers have got it right. Perhaps the world isn't round. I don't see how it can be when it is so awful bumpy!"

"You feel like Nat did, I guess," chuckled Ned. "That was then my lovely brother was a whole lot younger than he is now—hey, Nat?"

"What's the burn?" asked Nathaniel White, Esquire.

"'Member when Miss Baker put the poser to you in intermediate school? 'Member about it, boy?"

"Oh, that's an old one," grunted Nat.

"Let's hear it—do," cried Dorothy. "Did Nattie miss his lesson?"

"He wasn't paying much attention, I reckon," said Ned, just scaling a corner post as they took a turn, and scaring a squawking flock of hens almost into "nervous prosperity," as Tavia called it. "Miss Baker was giving us fits in the physical geography line. She snaps one at Nat:

"'What's the shape of the earth, Nathaniel?'

"'Oh! Ugh-huh? Round,' says Nat, just barely waking up.

"'How do you know it's round?' demands Miss Baker.

"'All right,' says Nat. 'It's square, then. I don't mean to argue about it!'"

"Aw, I never!" cried Nat, as the others shouted their appreciation of the story. "That's just one of Ned's yarns."

With similar "carryings-on" they lightened the rough way to the sawmill camp. The last mile they had to walk, leaving the *Firebird* at a farmer's place. There was no such thing as taking the automobile to the camp.

"I hope Tom Moran is here," said Dorothy, again and again, to her friend, Tavia. "But I feel as though we were due to have another disappointment."

"Oh, I hope not," groaned Tavia.

The boys would not keep to the wood road, but

scrambled over stumps and brambles, raising the hue and cry after timid rabbits, starting an old cock partridge now and then, and chasing chipmunks along the fences.

"I'd love to have a woodchuck bake," Abe Perriton said. "The kids say they've found several woodchuck holes up near the Rouse place."

"Joe and Roger, you mean?" asked Dorothy, to whom Abe was speaking.

"And Octavia's brother Jack. Yes. Those kids would find woodchucks if there were any in the county. M-m-m! did you ever eat woodchuck, Tavia?"

"Sure I did. But I never expect to enjoy a woodchuck bake again. I'm grown up now," called Tavia, from her position in the lead with Bob Niles.

"If the kids really have found the holes—and Mr. Woodchuck is home," said Abe, "we might have a picnic, even if it is cold weather—say day after to-morrow."

"Nice weather for a picnic," laughed Dorothy. "See! there's still some snow in the fence corners."

"And the groundhogs will be as poor as Job's turkey," said Tavia, who understood about such things better, even, than a boy.

"Hurrah! there's the mill," shouted Nat.

The whine of the saw as it cut through a log

floated down to them through the aisles of the wood. They hurried to reach their destination.

The saw was flying and the few men about the mill were working speedily. Mr. Polk himself, whom they knew by sight, was dragging a huge log out of the water by the aid of a chain and a small engine. But nowhere in sight was "that redhead."

"Hello, Abe Perriton!" shouted the master of the mill. "Your father going to send that gang? Or are you huskies—and the little ladies—goin' to roll logs for me?"

"I guess father will send along men. But we'll roll *that* one for you, Mr. Polk," laughed Abe, as the huge log came up the runway to the mill.

The boys grabbed canthooks and helped put the log in place upon the carriage. The girls looked on with interest, for the working of a saw-mill with a disk-saw of this size is not uninteresting.

"But that log's got a hollow in it, Mr. Polk," advised Tavia, the sharp-eyed.

"I know it, Miss. But the grain of the wood's so straight, and the hollow's so small, that I believe we're going to get some mighty fine planks out of it, just the same," replied the sawyer.

"Ask him about Tom Moran," begged Dorothy, *sotto-voce*.

"Just wait till he gets this log on the carriage. Now it goes!" exclaimed the interested Tavia.

The saw struck the hollow place the first clip, the outside slab was cut off, and out of the hollow flopped something that made the girls scream.

"A snake!" gasped Dorothy.

"Maybe it's an eel," said Tavia.

But quick-eyed Nat jumped for it and held up the flopping creature. It was a beautiful brook trout more than two feet long.

"Great find, boy!" declared Mr. Polk. "The law ain't off until April first; but I reckon that's your kill."

"We'll have the picnic, anyway!" laughed Bob Niles. "I bet trout baked in the ashes beats wood-chuck all to pieces!"

Dorothy had come close to the sawyer now and tapped him on the arm.

"Oh, sir!" she exclaimed. "Isn't Tom Moran here with you?"

Polk's face clouded. "The red-haired rascal wouldn't stay. He don't like sawmill work. He worked for me yesterday and started in this morning; but an hour before you came he lit out."

"Gone?" gasped Dorothy.

"Yes, ma'am!"

"And you don't know where he's gone?" broke in Tavia.

"Couldn't tell ye," said Polk. "He lit out—walkin'—toward Pollinary. But that's twenty mile from here. Dunno as he'll go that far."

CHAPTER XXIV

"ALIAS JOHN SMITH"

THE wood smoke curled up in a spiral from the side of a big, rotting log where Nat had settled on the camp. The *Firebird* stood beside the narrow road with the lunch board spread, and Ned and Abe were diligently making ready the picnic repast, of which the seven pound trout and a half-peck of potatoes, bought of a farmer, were the main viands.

But how good it all did smell! The girls had appetites equal to the boys' own. And although Dorothy and Tavia were deeply disappointed in their search for Tom Moran, they "threw aside carking care," as Nat said, for the time being.

"For there is another day coming, Dot!" he declared. "A man with a head as red as that fellow's cannot be lost for long—no, indeed!"

"Cheerful soul, is Nattie," jollied Ned. "He always was hopeful. 'Member when you were fishing in the bathtub that time, kid?"

"What time?" demanded his brother, suspecting one of Edward's jokes.

"You know—when mother asked you what you expected to catch? And says you: 'Pollyglubs.'"

"What is a pollyglub?" says the mater, and you handed her back a hot one.

"Oh, I did?" grunted Nat. "Don't remember it. What did I say?"

"Why, says you: 'Don't know; I haven't caught one yet.' Oh, you couldn't beat Nattie for hopefulness. He was one sanguine kid," laughed Ned. Bob slapped Nat on the back at that and rolled him over on a dry bit of sod where they wrestled for a few minutes—until Ned yelled for help at the campfire. Soon all six of the young folk were busy discussing the luncheon.

"This is really the nicest meal I've eaten since we were in camp—eh, Doro?" asked Tavia.

"I believe you, dear," admitted her friend.

But Dorothy could not be very enthusiastic. Her disappointment over missing Tom Moran was keen. And she was not much fun that night when the boys all came over to Tavia's for a "sing" and a general good time. Her mind was fixed upon the watch-and-watch they were to keep upon the general delivery window of the post-office the next day.

Joe demanded the privilege of being the first "man on duty." He was deeply interested in the Tom Moran conspiracy, as he insisted upon calling it because he admired Dorothy so, and because

his boyish heart and sense of chivalry had been touched by the story of little Celia, "the findling."

"If this chap who's written to you, Doro," said Joe, with decided appreciation of the situation, "is in communication with Tom Moran, maybe we can catch Celia's brother before he gets any farther away from Dalton."

"But he's going farther away all the time, it seems," sighed Dorothy. "And up there beyond Polk's mill is a wild country."

Young Joe went off after an early breakfast in Tavia's kitchen, full of importance. He was to stand guard at the post-office window until ten o'clock, or until one of the other boys, or Dorothy or Tavia, relieved him.

The signal agreed upon with the mail-clerk was a newspaper dropped through the opening after the person calling for "John Smith's" letter turned away. Joe served his time patiently, and nothing happened. Nat White lounged down, entered the post-office corridor, tweaked Joe's ear, and sent him off about his business.

"Johnny Travers and Rogue are waiting for you to go woodchucking," Nat told his cousin. "Off with you!"

Dorothy took her own luncheon early, and drifted into the post-office about one o'clock. Tavia was to join her later.

"Never did think you'd come," groaned Nat.
"I'm starved to death."

"No sign of the Mystery yet?" breathed Dorothy.

"Nary a sign. I'm off! Good luck."

And if finding the mysterious "John Smith" was sure enough good luck, Dorothy could consider herself fortunate within half an hour. A lanky, hesitating youth approached the general delivery window. Twice he stepped back and allowed other people to get in front of him. Somehow Dorothy's attention was particularly attracted to the nondescript's face.

He might have been seventeen—perhaps older. There was a little yellow fuzz on his cheeks and chin, showing that his blonde beard was sprouting early. He was possessed of sharp features and a high and narrow forehead, prominent, watery blue eyes, and scarcely a vestige of eyebrows or lashes. This lack in the upper part of his face gave him a blank appearance—like the end wall of a house with two shutterless windows in it.

Below his countenance was quite as unattractive. In the first place he had a retreating, weak chin, prominent upper teeth, and an enormous Adam's apple. He was evidently nervous, or bashful. Dorothy saw him swallow several times before he could speak to the clerk inside the window.

And when he swallowed, that bunch in his throat went up and down in a most ridiculous way.

"What did you say the name was?" Dorothy heard the mail clerk ask.

The shambling youth repeated it: "John Smith. Mis-ter John Smith. Yes, sir. Thank ye, sir.

The boy backed away with something white in his hand which Dorothy knew to be her letter. A newspaper, pushed through the window, fluttered to the floor of the corridor. But Dorothy was already going out of the post-office.

The youth followed her out. The letter had been put away somewhere in his skimpy clothing; for it must be admitted that not a garment visible on the stranger seemed to fit him.

Either his trousers, and coat, and vest, had been intended for a much smaller youth, or he was growing so fast that he could not wear a suit out before wrists, ankles, and neck were thrust through their several openings in the clothes in a most ridiculous fashion.

"I never saw such a funny-looking creature," Dorothy told herself, as she watched the boy from across the street. "And I don't remember ever having seen him in Dalton before. He looks ignorant enough to have written that letter I received, too; and yet—there is an innocent look about his face. I wonder if he really has intelli-

gence enough to fix up any scheme to make money out of those who wish to find Tom Moran?"

The boy dawdled along the street and Dorothy walked on the other side, looking into shop windows now and then, but unfailing in her vigilance. She did not let the shambling youth out of her line of vision; and especially was she watchful when he passed close to any other person.

Nobody spoke to him; he seemed quite unknown in the town. He drifted down toward the railroad yards where—in two or three mean streets—the poorer and most shiftless denizens of Dalton resided.

Down here was an open lot on which much of the refuse of the town was dumped to fill in a yawning gully. Ashes and piles of cans, and boxes and the like, offered to the poorer children a playground most amusing, if not conducive to health. At one corner two or three shacks—incongruous huts they were—had been constructed. Certain squatters evidently had taken up their abode in these, despite the still cool weather.

Lengths of rusty stovepipes were thrust through the side walls of these huts. The roofs were made of oil cans, unsoldered, and beaten flat, the sheets overlapping one another. Doors wobbled on leather hinges. A broken window was plugged up with an old silk hat.

Dorothy felt a shiver as she ventured further



"I'D VERY MUCH LIKE TO KNOW YOUR NAME," SAID DOROTHY.
Dorothy Dale's Promise.

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into the bad section of the town; but she was determined to learn something more of the boy who had received the letter addressed to "John Smith" from the post-office.

He crossed the open lot, aiming without doubt for the squalid huts. Dorothy quickened her steps and remained on the sidewalk, following the line of the open square. She reached the corner nearest to the huts just as the youth strolled out of the open gully and to the side of the nearest shack.

There, sitting upon an overturned tub, barefooted, and dressed in coarse petticoat and blouse, was a hatless woman picking over a mess of greens in a rusty dishpan.

"Wa-al! I wanter know, Poke!" she drawled, looking up at the shambling youth. "Y'don't mean ter say you've got back?"

"Ye din't tell me ter run," said the young fellow, dropping down upon a broken box beside her.

"Wal! Plague take it! you air the laziest—— Good afternoon, Ma'am! was you wantin' anything?"

This last question was directed at Dorothy. The girl, quite thoughtless in her excitement, had crossed the street and stood before the woman and the youth.

"I—I——Oh! I'd very much like to know your name," said Dorothy, rather confused.

"Huh? Y' got some pertic'lar reason for findin' out, Miss?"

"Perhaps," and Dorothy began to look at the woman more calmly.

"I ain't none ashamed of it. It's Daggett. Jane Daggett. And this is my boy, Poke Daggett."

"You never were called Smith, I suppose?" queried Dorothy, quickly.

"Smith?" the woman exclaimed, and although she did not change color—she was too sallow for that—her little black eyes brightened perceptibly.

"No. I can't say I ever was. Daggett was my secon' husban'; but I never married a Smith, an' my own name—'fore I married a-tall—was Blink-ensopp. Now, air you satisfied, Miss?"

"Not wholly," Dorothy said, with courage. "If your name is not Smith, and your son's name is not Smith, why did he just get a letter from the post-office addressed to Mr. John Smith?"

The boy, Poke, jumped; indeed, he almost fell off the box. His mother pinched him sharply in the leg.

"Dunno what ye mean, lady," she whined. "Poke ain't never got a letter in his life—I don't believe. Has you, Poke?"

"I—I never!" gasped Poke, the lie showing plainly in his face.

"You have a letter somewhere in your pocket now," accused Dorothy, looking at the youth di-

rectly. "Don't deny it. I wrote it myself, so I should know. And," she added, wheeling on the mother, who had risen and let the greens slip from her lap, "I want to know what *you* know about Tom Moran?"

"Tom Moran?" whispered the boy, shaking his head, and looking terrified.

But the woman wasn't like that. She was a hard, bony-looking woman, and very tall and strong. While Dorothy was speaking she had beckoned to a black-haired, red-faced woman who stood curiously a little distance away.

"What's wanted, Jane?" demanded this virago, coming forward.

"Here's a poor gal out o' her senses, I make no doubt," said the woman who owned the name of Jane Daggett. "She—she's firin' off her mouth too much—that's what she's doin'. Sech folks oughter be restrained——"

"An' we'll restrain 'em!" declared the black-haired woman, and the next instant she seized Dorothy by the shoulders and ran into the open door of the hut.

Both women were in the shack with the girl, and the door was closed, before Dorothy could even scream.

CHAPTER XXV

THE WOODCHUCK HUNT

"Now, I got it all fixed, Tavia. You come along with us and see the fun," said Joe Dale, at luncheon time. "I'm sorry Dorothy's gone over to the post-office. She won't find anything, I'm afraid. Nobody came there this morning when *I* was on watch," he added, as though that was conclusive.

"But she will expect me——"

"No, she won't. Bob and Ned are going there right after two o'clock, they say, and they'll take her place."

"If Bob Niles is going there I don't want to go," said Tavia, with a toss of her head. "He's getting too—numerous."

"Come on with us and hunt woodchucks. We got the holes all marked this morning," said her brother Johnny. "And Rogue's got a turtle—a real snappy one, if it is so early in the spring."

"A turtle?" asked Tavia, wonderingly. "What do you do with a turtle catching woodchucks?"

"Oh, you'll see," promised Joe. "Come on."

And Tavia, who was just *crazy* to run wild in the woods and fields again, as she herself said, was over-ruled and went with the boys.

They went up into the fields near the Rouse farm. Had they gone by the way of the railroad crossing they might have passed "the Dump," as the open lot was called, just about the time Dorothy was talking with Jane Daggett and her hopeful son.

But Tavia and the boys—all Dorothy's friends, in fact—were quite unaware of the trouble into which Dorothy's impetuosity had gotten her.

The old pasture in which the boys had discovered the woodchuck burrows was full of sheltering clumps of dwarfed trees, and piles of stone. A woodchuck always has two openings to his home, and unless a watch is set at both holes no amount of smoking out will enable the hunter to grab Mr. Woodchuck.

"But we got it cinched!" declared Joe Dale, with excitement. "See this old mud turtle?"

The turtle produced was as large as the bottom of a two-quart pail. Tavia, who knew lots about snaring and trapping small game, was frankly puzzled over the use to which the turtle was to be put.

"Now you'll see," giggled her brother. "And we ain't goin' to hurt the turtle a mite. Pull out his tail, Joe."

"Yes, pull out his tail, brother," urged Roger, dancing around the group that hovered about one of the doors to Mr. Woodchuck's den.

"Isn't a turtle funny?" laughed Tavia. "He sits down, swallows his head, and puts both his hands and feet in his pockets."

"Now the string," said Joe, seriously. He tied a piece of stout cord to the creature's tail.

"It'll slip," objected Johnny.

"No, 'twon't!"

"Give me the wire, Rogue," commanded Johnny.

The younger lad produced a piece of thin wire about two feet in length. At one end was a loop, and to this the bit of stout cord was fastened. Then, to the other end of the wire, Johnny attached a ball of cotton. Joe produced a bottle of coal oil.

"Whatever are you horrid boys going to do?" demanded Tavia, suddenly.

"Now, we're not going to hurt the turtle," explained her brother, calmly. "You needn't fret. We're going to get and bake Mr. Woodchuck. He's proper game. Mr. Turtle may be scared for a minute, or two, but that's all. He is a cold-blooded insect——"

"Insect! hear to him!" burst out Joe Dale, laughing uproariously.

"Oh—ah-ugh! I mean reptile," grunted Johnny.

"That's as bad as one of the fellows in school," said Roger. "Teacher asked him what an oyster was, and he told her it was a fish built like a nut."

"Goody!" chuckled Tavia. "So it is. But do you think this cold-blooded reptile—which is also a good deal like a nut—needs warming up, boys?"

"We won't warm him," explained Johnny. "Don't you see we've got the wire tied to his tail with a piece of string? If the wire should get hot *he'd* never feel it. Now come on, Joe. Pour on the oil. You watching that other hole, Rogue? We don't want the old groundhog to fool us."

"He hasn't poked his snout out here yet," declared the smallest boy, with confidence.

But Tavia, who had begun to look worried, suddenly interfered.

"Say! I want to know," she demanded, "wherever you boys learned to smoke a woodchuck out in this way? It's not nice. I don't like it——"

"Aw, listen to her!" ejaculated Johnny Travers. "Don't be a softie, Tavia."

"I tell you it doesn't hurt the turtle," said Joe Dale.

"I don't care," said Tavia, warmly. "Even if it *only looks* as though it might hurt him, we *shouldn't* do it. We shouldn't even be willing to

stand for animals *appearing* to be hurt. It's ~~not~~ nice—it's not kindly——"

"Aw, shucks!" began her brother again; but Joe shut him up quickly:

"That's all right, Jack. If Tavia says we're not to do it, we won't. Let him go," and in a moment he had released the reptile, which began crawling off desperately as though he knew just how narrow an escape he had had from becoming an animated torch.

For a minute or two Johnny was inclined to pout. But Tavia (who knew as much about woodchuck hunting as the boys themselves) quickly made a brush torch, and they saturated that with oil, touched it off with a match, and pushed it down the woodchuck hole.

There was a big stack of corn fodder near at hand; but the interested young folk did not pay much attention to it at the moment. They did not even observe a certain rustling in the fodder when they first came to the woodchuck burrow; nor did they see a pair of very bright eyes, belonging to a young man with very red hair, that peered out at them when they began smoking out the denizen of the hole in the hillside. This red-haired person only grinned at them and then lay down for another nap in the fodder. He was laying up sleep for the coming night, for he expected to "jump" the fast freight to the West that passed through Dalton

at midnight, and only stopped at the water-tank below this hill.

The three boys and Tavia waited at the other end of the woodchuck burrow.

"If he doesn't get heart-failure, or apoplexy, or something like that, Mr. Woodchuck will run out in about two shakes of a lamb's tail," chuckled Johnny Travers.

"Your lamb has an awful long tail, Johnny," quoth his sister, teasingly, after a minute or so.

And then she suddenly joined the boys in a whoop of excitement. The nose of the woodchuck appeared. Little Rogue hit it a crack and the creature didn't run far. But Johnny waited with uplifted "whanger" and there appeared a second woodchuck. They got that one, too—and both were pretty plump, for all that they had been hived up during the winter.

"We've got enough for a 'bake—a small one," said Roger.

"Aw, wait," said his brother. "There's another hole. Come on, Johnny! Let's make a new torch."

Johnny obeyed and Joe led the way around the stack. There were signs of another woodchuck hollow. They repeated the performance with the torch here, and then grouped about the other outlet to welcome the groundhog when he appeared.

In ten minutes they had a third fat carcass, and the boys began to skin and clean them.

"Nat was laughing at us," said Joe Dale. "I reckon he and Cousin Ned will be glad enough to eat some of these fellows."

"Faugh! you wouldn't really eat 'em?" began Tavia. But the boys laughed uproariously.

"Ain't that just like a girl?" cried Johnny. "Woodchuck is as good eating as 'possum, or coon, or squirrel."

"That's all right," laughed Tavia, tossing her head. "Everybody to their taste, as the old woman said when she kissed her cow. I'll choose squirrel—and I reckon Doro will, too—and the bigger boys. And I know where we can get some, for there's no law on squirrels in this county. We'll have some potatoes in the bake, too."

"Goody!" cried Roger, jumping around. "It takes girls to think of the fixin's."

"That's so," agreed Johnny, getting over his little grouch.

"And let's have the bake in Griscom's grove—you know—back of the old schoolhouse; there's a fine place there. Don't you remember, Johnny?"

"Of course," said her brother. "There's plenty of stones there for an oven. And——"

"Oh, oh, oh!" screamed Tavia, suddenly.

"Whatever became of that torch, Rogue?" demanded Joe.

It was too late, however, to wonder about that. One side of the stack of fodder was all ablaze.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE FIERY FURNACE

DOROTHY was not likely to scream—not just at the moment she was thrust into the old shack by her two vigorous captors. For the black-haired woman clapped her dirty palm right over the girl's mouth, hissing into her ear meanwhile:

“Let a squawk out o’ ye, me foine lady, and I’ll choke it back inter yer throat like a cork-stopper. Understand me, now?”

Dorothy nodded. Although she was greatly startled, she was not so frightened that she could not think clearly. What would these women make by trying to hold her captive here, so near a public street? Surely they would not really injure her if she obeyed them.

“Easy, dear,” urged the light-haired woman, who confessed to the name of Jane Daggett. “We won’t hurt a hair of her head—but that hat——”

She tore the pretty hat Dorothy wore from her head. Then off came the girl’s jacket. Jane Daggett spied the watch Dorothy carried.

"The jewelry's too much for the likes of her," she said, grinning. "And there's her ring."

The black-haired woman tore the ring from Dorothy's finger. "That's *my* share, Jane," she said. "Don't you be a pig, my dear."

"Sure we'll share an' share alike," replied Jane Daggett, grimly. "Take off your dress, my dear," she commanded Dorothy. "It's too good for ye. I'll give ye one o' me own. It may be a mite too big for ye; but ye'll grow to it," and she chuckled at her own witticism.

"Oh, please!" gasped Dorothy, now freed from the bigger woman's hand.

"Hush up!" ordered the black-haired virago.

"She's got a pretty purse, too," laughed Jane Daggett, dragging the article from the coat pocket.

Dorothy could not help crying a little. She dared not make a loud noise, for she saw that the rougher woman would instantly strangle her if she did so. But she would not unbutton her dress.

"You'd better mind!" hissed the black-haired woman, in a low voice. "You'd better——"

The unuttered threat made Dorothy tremble violently. She felt as though she would faint. Things began to turn black around her. The hideous, grinning faces of her two captors swam before her gaze——

Suddenly there came a pounding on the wall of the shack. "Hush!" cried Jane Daggett.

"What's that?" whispered the other woman.

"My Poke. What's th' matter, Poke?"

"Cheese it! Here's some fellers——"

The drawling voice of the young man who had got the letter at the post-office ceased. The next instant Dorothy heard the cheerful voice of Ned White, her big cousin:

"Hullo, you! Didn't a pretty girl just go past here—a girl with red in her hat and a tan coat?"

"Don't know nothin' erbout no gal," drawled Poke Daggett.

Now, Poke was naturally a coward. His lantern features likely showed that he was telling a falsehood, too. Bob Niles' voice interposed:

"You've got good eyes, young fellow. You saw Miss Dale all right. Which way did she go?"

"Ain't seen no gal," drawled Poke.

Jane Daggett had Dorothy by one arm. Her lean fingers were bruising the tender flesh warningly. On the other side stood the black-haired woman with a piece of plank held threateningly to strike. Dorothy could see nails in that plank—if the woman used it, her face would be lacerated!

"Hul-lo!" exclaimed Ned's voice, suddenly.

"Handkerchief, by Jove!" cried Bob.

"It's Dorothy's, too! This rascal——"

There was a sudden spurning of the gravel. Poke, lazy as he was, had begun to run. With a shout Bob leaped away after him.

But Ned turned toward the closed cabin door. The wadded-up handkerchief had dropped from the cuff of Dorothy's coat just as she was being pushed inside. It was off the sidewalk, and Ned's brain worked quickly.

"Come back here, Bob!" he yelled. "He's only putting us off the scent. *Here she is!*"

In a moment Ned burst into the shack. Jane Daggett dodged and ran out. The black-haired virago aimed a blow at Ned's head with the plank, but missed him by a hair's breadth.

"Look out! Look out!" cried Dorothy, sinking into a corner, out of the way.

"Oh, I'd give a dollar if you were a man for a minute!" exclaimed Ned, stepping around the woman to dodge her blows, but having to stand her coarse vituperations.

Bob came back with a whoop. The woman dodged out and disappeared up the gully on the trail of Jane Daggett. Dorothy's hat, coat, watch, purse and ring went with them.

"They've robbed and beaten you, Dot," cried Ned, beside himself with rage. "Oh! if they'd only been men so we could hit 'em."

"Well, now," began Bob, when Dorothy panted:

"There's the boy, Ned. Let's catch him. Never mind my things. That boy got the letter and he knows about Tom Moran, I am sure."

"He's crossed the tracks," said Bob. "If you hadn't called me back, Ned, I'd had him."

"We'll get him yet," declared Ned. "Come on."

He took his cousin's hand. Bob seized Dorothy's other hand and she ran between them, down across the railroad tracks and up the hill. They were going toward Rouse's farm. They saw the lanky, white-haired youth climbing the heights above them.

Suddenly smoke and fire burst out at a point in the upper pasture far from Simeon Rouse's house. It was a fodder stack afire, and Dorothy and the two boys saw several figures running about it.

The path over the upland which Poke Daggett followed led him right past the fired stack of corn fodder. Ned and Dorothy both saw this.

"Leave me behind, boys—do," she gasped. "You can overtake him and I can't."

"Isn't that Tavia?" demanded Bob Niles. "It *is* she, I'm sure."

"And the boys," cried Dorothy. "Tell them to stop him, Ned!"

Ned White raised his voice in a great whoop. He waved his hands and pointed to the running Daggett. The latter was almost up to the stack of burning fodder.

It was Tavia's quick mind that understood Ned's yells and gestures. She sprang straight into the path of the white-haired youth. He dodged

her, but came to his knees. Joe and Johnny, well up in football tactics, tackled low and brought the fellow down again before he had fairly regained his feet.

"That's it! Hold him!" whooped Bob and Ned.

They left Dorothy behind as they clambered up the rough hillside. The staggering Daggett put forth the last ounce of his faint strength. He rose up, threw off the two smaller boys, and started on.

And just then a new actor appeared in the field—and a most astonishing one. A yell of fright sounded, and there sprang out of the fodder stack—seemingly from the very heart of the fire—a figure wreathed by smoke and sparks. Indeed, the man's clothing was afire at several points.

But most striking of all, his hair was the reddest of the red, and his freckles stood out prominently on the background of his pale skin.

"Fire! Fire," he roared. "Who's tr-ryin' to burn me up? Wow! is that you, Poke Daggett?"

He whirled right into the flying Daggett's arms. He had been trying to beat out the sparks upon his clothing, and as he collided with Poke, the two went to the ground.

"It—it's that redhead!" gasped Tavia. "Oh, it's surely Tom Moran!"

Joe and Johnny—and even little Roger Dale—ran to assist in putting out the fire in the red-haired

man's clothing. Poke Daggett rose and tried to drag himself away.

But Ned and Bob arrived, and the former ordered young Daggett to stop. "We've got a bone to pick with you, you white-haired rascal. Wait! Isn't your name Moran?" he asked of the man who had been afire.

"I don't know—they woke me up so quick," returned the red-headed one, with a grin. "However did these kids set the fodder afire? Somebody will have to pay Simeon Rouse for it."

"We'll 'tend to that," returned Ned, quickly. "But Miss Dale is very anxious to meet you."

"Meet me?" asked Tom Moran, for it was he. "About that runaway the other day? I'm mighty sorry the steers ran——"

"That's not it," said Tavia, briskly. "It's about your sister Celia, and Miss Olaine, and——"

Tom Moran's face changed instantly. He forgot all about Poke, who would have crept away had not Bob taken a turn in his jacket collar and held the fellow prisoner.

"I guess you're saying something now, Miss," said Moran, gravely. "What do you know about my little sister? I've been hunting for her a long time. And the other person you speak of——"

Then Dorothy arrived and, as Tavia said, "the court of inquiry went into executive session."

CHAPTER XXVII

THE RING ON MISS OLAINÉ'S FINGER

TOM MORAN read the besmirched letter Dorothy had received through her advertisement in the paper. Then he made Poke Daggett give up the reply he had taken addressed to "John Smith."

"Explanation's easy," he said, bluntly. "These Daggetts knew me. Why, I fed 'em for a whole month this winter when Jane Daggett was sick. Ain't that so, Poke?"

Poke whined: "Wal, 'twarn't none o' my doin's, Tom. I tole ma how 'twould be. But she seen the notice in the Salvation Army paper. One o' them Salvation Anns was round ter see us an' lef' the paper; maw said mebbe there was money in it for us ef we played our cards right——"

"And all we were trying to find Mr. Moran for was because of his little sister—and she wanting him so!" ejaculated Tavia. "My! but you Daggetts must be mean sort of folks."

This frank statement drew no comment from Poke. He was too meek now.

"Well, I reckon you can get out," said Tom Moran, grimly. "And tell your maw to bring around to the place where I've been boarding Miss Dale's hat and coat, the watch, the pocket-book and the ring—and anything else they took from Miss Dale. If she doesn't do it I'll see that she and you and that Munsey woman all go to jail, where you belong. Believe me, I'll do it!"

Tom Moran, although he had been only working at odd jobs about Dalton, was a person of intelligence and seemed to feel sure of his ability to do as he said. When Poke was out of the way, he turned back to Dorothy and smiled broadly.

"I get it that you have been interesting yourself in my affairs, Miss, and I thank you. If you can tell me anything about poor little Cely——"

"I can tell you all about her, Mr. Moran," cried Dorothy, eagerly. "And you really couldn't find her?"

"I'll tell you how it was," said Tom Moran. "I went away to get work that would pay me better. I was going to send money to Auntie every month. I went with a gang to Mexico, and the very first week we were at work a crowd of rebels came and drove us away from the job, and I got shot.

"I was in a hospital in Texas. Then I came East, after writing and getting no answer from Auntie. When I got home the very house we

lived in was torn down and there wasn't a soul in the neighborhood remembered my aunt, or little Cely, or knew what became of them.

"I hunted around and advertised in the papers, but didn't get any news. I had to go to work again, and I got a job on the Adrian Building, that was put up right next to the old Rector Street School. I guess you read about that school being burned?" he asked, with a sidelong glance at Dorothy, that reminded the girl very much of Celia herself.

"We looked it up," said Dorothy.

"Oh, and there's Miss Olaine!" interposed the deeply interested Tavia. "Did you know Miss Rebecca Olaine?"

"Hush, Tavia!" admonished Dorothy.

But Tom Moran flushed up to the very roots of his red hair, and his blue eyes opened wide.

"Guess I do know her," he said. "Why—why, we boarded at the same house together, for a while. On Morrell Street. Of course—of course, Miss Olaine was too high-toned a lady for me——"

Tavia sniffed. "I don't know, Mr. Moran. She's one of our teachers now at Glenwood. Aren't you just as good as anybody else?"

"Well! I dunno. I ain't eddicated, as ye might say. When I get re'l excited I drop inter the brogue, too," and he shook his head with a grin.

"Howsomever, no need to speak of that fire—or Miss Olainé——"

"But we want to know," began the eager and curious Tavia.

"Hold on, now!" cried Ned White. "Let's have things on order. All this search of Dorothy's was taken on because of the little girl, I understand?"

"I promised Celia I'd find her brother," said Dorothy, gravely. "And I believe you are he, Mr. Moran. She says her brother is Tom Moran, and that he is very big and strong, and—that his hair is red——"

"That's me!" cried Tom Moran, slapping his knee, and bursting into laughter. "The little dear! She used ter pull my hair when she was a baby. She ain't forgot."

"No," said Dorothy, quietly. "She hasn't forgotten. 'He builds bridges, and things,' Celia says. And she prays for you to come for her every night, Tom Moran. She—she is just wearing her little heart out for you," and Dorothy hid her eyes and sobbed aloud.

"Oh, my dear!" cried Tavia, coming to hug her.

"You tell me all about her, Miss," urged the red-haired man. "I'll sure go after her if she's a thousand miles away."

"Oh, she's not," replied Dorothy, through her

tears. "She's only eight miles from Glenwood, on Mrs. Hogan's farm."

"That ogress!" muttered Tavia.

"What's that?" exclaimed Tom Moran. "What d'ye call her? Isn't Cely being treated right by some woman?"

"It's only that the child wants to be loved—and Mrs. Hogan doesn't love her," Dorothy said, mildly. "She's never improperly treated—not really."

"Just the same, that Hogan is an awful woman," grumbled Tavia.

Dorothy proceeded to repeat to Tom Moran all the story of little Celia, as the child had told it to her; and she told, also, of her first meeting with Celia and her promise, and how she (Dorothy) had been lost in the snow and had spent Sunday at Mrs. Hogan's; likewise, how Celia, "jes' the cutest little thing," had longed to see Dorothy so much that she had run away from the farm woman and found Glenwood Hall all by herself.

"And if you don't say she's the cutest thing you ever saw when you set eyes on her——" interrupted the exuberant Tavia.

"I want to see her bad enough, the Lord knows. I was going to beat it away from Dalton this very night. Lucky you boys set that rick afire, or I'd still been sleeping, and I'd caught the night freight out of here—that's right," said Tom Moran.

"But I'll get a job now—a steady job. I'll have an anchor if I have Cely. That's what Miss Olaine used to say I needed. Ye see," said Tom, again blushing, "she an' me was awful good friends once."

"But why did you run away after the school-house fire?" asked Tavia, the curious.

"Well, ye see," said Tom Moran, "the newspaper made such a fuss over it—and folks began to talk about doin' foolish things——"

"You were a hero!" cried Tavia. "A real hero."

"Aw, no," said Moran, blushing again. "That was all newspaper talk. Anyhow I didn't want money for saving them kids from being burned up."

"But you needn't have run away," sighed Dorothy. "Your modesty made us a lot of trouble. You know, we might have found you out a long time ago——"

"Huh! Everybody didn't think so much of me," grinned Tom Moran. Yet he looked serious the next minute. "You see—Miss—Olaine—— Well, we'd had some words, and I'd left the Morrell Street house before the fire happened. I'd have gone away from that town, anyway."

"And your seeing her at the fire helped to make you decide to leave town?" demanded the shrewd Tavia.

"Why, Tavia!" murmured Dorothy, rather disturbed because her friend seemed to pry into Tom Moran's personal affairs.

"Something like that, I s'pose," replied the young man, running his blackened hands through his mop of red hair. "Ye see—Well! we was engaged."

"To be married?" queried Ned, open-eyed.

"Of course."

"Oh, dear me!" whispered Dorothy in Tavia's ear; "and we treated Miss Olaine so meanly."

"Huh! Did *we* know it?" returned her friend.

"I guess she got sorry right away. Of course I ain't in her class," said Tom Moran, soberly. "She's got education. I ain't got nothing but a little schoolin' an' me two hands. But she was willing to wear my ring, and——"

"Tell me," interrupted Dorothy, herself getting personal now, "is it a ring with a diamond in the middle and little chip emeralds around it?"

"Ye—as," drawled Tom Moran, looking at her again in his sly way.

"She's wearing it yet," murmured Dorothy.

"And on her engagement finger," cried Tavia.

"I remember! She—she——"

"Hush!" warned Dorothy. Then she said to Tom Moran: "She must think a whole lot of *you* yet, Mr. Moran."

"Do—do you think so?"

"I am sure." She whispered in his ear about Miss Olaine coming to Number Nineteen the night little Celia had slept with Dorothy, and how the teacher had stooped over and kissed the little girl.

"She did it in memory of you—I am sure," Dorothy said, earnestly.

The others had stepped aside to look at the woodchucks. Tavia had seen that Dorothy wished to speak to Tom Moran alone.

"Why was it she wouldn't let me haul her out of that fire, then, two years ago?" demanded Tom Moran, in an injured tone.

"Wouldn't she let you help her?"

"She give me a shove into the fire herself. Guess that was an accident. But she said, 'Don't you touch me!'" declared Tom.

"I wouldn't let that worry me," Dorothy said, decidedly. "I am sure that Miss Olaine has been grieving over your absence all this time. She was excited at the fire, I suppose. Oh, Mr. Moran! you can't always tell what a woman means by what she says."

"Is that so?" returned Tom Moran, wonderingly.

CHAPTER XXVIII

"JES' THE CUTEST LITTLE THING"

THE woodchuck bake in the grove behind the old school house, which Dorothy and Tavia used to attend, was pronounced a success by the three youngsters. Of course, there were not many invited guests, for aside from three woodchucks and a half bushel of sweet potatoes, there were but half a dozen squirrels baked in the ashes of a huge campfire. These were not sufficient to supply a regiment, as Tavia herself said—and Tavia was a generous body.

Besides the two girl friends and the three small boys, there were the four freshmen, three of whom had frankly come down here to Dalton for this spring vacation just because Dorothy and Tavia were here.

These individuals could not really be counted as guests—any of them. So Tom Moran was really the only guest at the bake. He had recovered Dorothy's hat and jacket and other possessions from the Daggetts and their friends, and

when he brought them to Tavia's, Dorothy and her chum made Tom come along with them to the picnic.

Ned White had gone to Mr. Rouse, the farmer, and paid for the burned fodder stack.

"Eight dollars, young gentlemen," said Ned, rather grimly, to Joe and Roger Dale and Tavia's brother. Rather a high price to pay per pound for woodchuck meat; and Nat figured it out to cost something like sixty or seventy cents per pound.

"Oh! don't talk about it that way, Nat," begged Joe. "It will taste so of money that none of us kids will want to eat it."

They all got pretty well acquainted with Tom Moran that day. And he really was a fine young fellow. Although his book learning might not be extensive, he had traveled much and was one of those fortunate persons who remember, and can talk of, what they have seen.

Tom Moran was going back with the girls the next day, for the vacation was close upon its end. At first he was not decided what he should do after getting little Celia from Mrs. Hogan. But Tavia and Dorothy fixed *that*.

"Tom," said Mr. Travers, when the party returned from the woodchuck bake, "I've been talking with my partners and we want you to settle down here in Dalton and work for us."

"I don't know, Mr. Travers," said the young

man, undecidedly. "You see, I had some words with Simpson——"

"Oh, you won't be under Simpson—and we won't put a mechanic like you to driving an ox-team, either. There is a better job than that here for you," and Mr. Travers talked seriously with the red-haired youth for an hour.

"The trouble with you is, you have never settled down. You haven't had an anchor. Now, Celia can't travel about with you, and she's got to be your care for some years to come."

"I know. If I can get her away from that Hogan woman. I may have trouble there—if the foundling asylum folk let Mrs. Hogan adopt her."

"If you want help in *that* matter, you trust to Major Dale, Dorothy's father. He'll see you through, Tom. And so will your friends here in Dalton. We want you to come back here and go to work."

Thus it was arranged. Tom, the next day, appeared at the railroad station in a neat suit and with a new grip in his hand. The grip was practically empty, he told Dorothy; but he proposed to get it filled up with nice clothes for Celia if he could get the child away from her taskmistress at once.

The White boys and Abe Perriton and Bob Niles traveled back to college in the *Firebird*, so

Dorothy and Tavia said good-bye to them before they left Dalton. Bob Niles tried to get Tavia off by herself to talk on the last evening they were together; but Tavia was suddenly very strict with him.

“You are nothing but a college freshman,” she told him, coolly, “and a very *fresh* freshman at that! Don’t you think for a minute that you are a grown-up young man—you are not. And *I* am only three months, or so, older than I was when we parted in New York. It’s going to be a long, long time before either Doro or I will begin to think seriously of young men. Besides—you’re not a twin,” she added, and ran away from him, leaving poor Bob greatly puzzled by her final phrase.

They were going back to Glenwood a day early, because of Tom’s anxiety. When the train reached the school station only Tavia got off; Dorothy went on to Belding with Celia’s brother.

At the station they hired a carriage and an hour later drove into the lane leading to Mrs. Hogan’s home.

It was the first real spring day. The grass “was getting green by the minute,” so Tom said; the trees were budding bountifully; every little rill and stream was full and dancing to its own melody over the pebbles; the early feathered comers, from

swamp and woodland, were splitting their throats in song.

And when the two drove into the yard there were sounds of altercation from the house—the first harsh sounds they had heard since starting from Belding.

"And that's the way ye do ut—heh?" exclaimed Mrs. Hogan's strident voice. "After all I been tellin' yez. Ye air the most impident, useless, wasteful crature that ever I come across! An' not a bit of gratchude have ye for me takin' yez out of the Findling an' givin' ye a home, an' sumpin' to ate, an' a place ter lie down in.' Bad 'cess ter yez, Cely Moran! Sorry the day I ever tuk yez——"

"I—I'm so sorry," interposed Celia's feeble little voice. "Won't—won't you please take me back there, ma'am?"

"Tak' ye back where?" demanded the woman, in an uglier tone, were that possible. "Tak' ye back where?"

"To the Findling, ma'am. Oh, dear me!" sobbed Celia, "I was a great deal happier there!"

"Ungrateful——"

"No, ma'am. It isn't that," declared the child, grown desperate at last, perhaps. "But you don't love me. You don't love any little girls. And I'd go without a sup to eat, or a roof like you give me, or—or a bed, jes' to be loved a little."

"Plague o' me life!" ejaculated the woman.

They heard her swift and heavy foot across the floor. The child cried out before she was struck. Tom had helped Dorothy out of the carriage and was tying the horse. Swift of foot, the girl from Glenwood was before him at the door.

"Celia!" she cried, before the echo of the slap crossed the kitchen.

Celia's whimper was changed to a scream of delight. She rushed across the room into Dorothy's arms.

"How dare you, Mrs. Hogan?" exclaimed Dorothy, her beautiful eyes fairly flashing with anger. "How dare you?"

"Who are ye, now? What! come to make more trouble, heh?" exclaimed the woman, advancing in her rage in a very threatening way toward Dorothy.

But Dorothy stood her ground, while the child cowered behind her. "You cannot scare me, Mrs. Hogan," declared Dorothy. "You dare not strike me. Nor shall you ever touch this little one again."

"Impidence!" gasped the woman. "I'll show ye——"

"Show me, missus," growled Tom Moran, his face very much flushed and his red hair seeming to stand fairly on end.

He had entered, put Dorothy and Celia gently to one side, and stood before the ogress. "Show

me, missus," he said again. "I'm more like *your* size."

"Who are you?" demanded the farm woman, taken aback.

But Celia's voice was again heard—and this time it was no whimper. She suddenly bounded upon Tom and clasped both her tiny arms about one of his sturdy legs.

"I know him! I know him!" she shrieked. "My Miss Dorothy Dale has kep' her *promise*. It's Tom Moran. I knowed I'd know him. *Don't you see his red hair?*"

"And he kin take his red hair out o' here," declared Mrs. Hogan, standing with arms akimbo and a very red face.

"It's quick enough I shall be doin' so," said Tom Moran, sternly. "And Cely shall come with me."

"Not much!" ejaculated the woman. "I got her, bound hard and fast be the orphan asylum folks——"

Tom seemed to swell until he was twice his usual size. His steely eyes flashed as Dorothy's had flashed.

"Let me tell ye something, me lady," he almost croaked, and shaking a finger in Mrs. Hogan's face. "If ye had a stack av papers from the foundling asylum, as high as yon tree, ye'd not kape me from takin' away me own sister—mind

that now! And *you* call yourself an Irishwoman? Where's yer hear-r-rt? Where's yer pity for the little wan of yer own race, left to the tinder care of strangers? Ah-h!"

Like Ned White, when he had tackled the Daggett woman and her crony, Tom Moran heartily wished at that moment that Mrs. Ann Hogan were a man!

"I'm going to take me sister away from ye," said Tom, after a minute's silence. "Stay me if ye dare!"

He picked the child up suddenly and hugged her fiercely to his broad breast. Celia, with a happy cry, put both arms about his neck, and looked up into his red face.

"I'se *so* glad you comed for me like you did, Tom Moran. And you *will* keep me with you always?"

"Please God I will, Cely," he said kissing her, hungrily.

The child laughed, and flung her head back so that she could see him the better.

"Do you hear, dear Dorothy Dale?" she cried. "I am going with Tom Moran. Why, maybe we'll keep house together. *I* can keep the house—jes' as clean! An' I can cook, an' scrub, an' wash—'cause you know, they say I'se jes' the cutest little thing!"

CHAPTER XXIX

WHITE LAWN AND WHITE ROSES

THE great green campus between Glenwood Hall and the road looked to be scattered over with snowdrifts. That is the way it must have looked to an aviator had one sailed over the old school and looked down upon the campus on this beautiful June day.

But the snow drifts were of lawn and roses. Every girl in the school was dressed in white, and every girl wore, or carried, white roses. They were grouped by classes, or in little cliques, while a photographer from the city with a great camera arranged to take a picture of the scene.

"Hope he'll hurry up," groaned Cologne, sitting with Dorothy and Tavia and some of the other girls. "My foot's asleep."

"Hush-a-by! don't wake it up," drawled Tavia. "You know, Cologne, you haven't really had a good sleep this half."

"Especially this last month or six weeks," groaned Ned Ebony. "Hasn't old Olaine just kept us on the hop?"

"Why," said Nita Brent, thoughtfully, "I had

been thinking Olaine was a whole lot nicer than she used to be."

"Certain sure she's done better by us since Easter," said Molly Richards, earnestly.

"You're famous for seeing the best side of a thing, Dicky," laughed Ned. "I tell you she's pushed me hard."

"And me!" "And us-uns!"

The wail became general. Dorothy's mellow laugh brought them to time.

"Where does the giggle come in, Miss Dale?" demanded Edna Black.

"Sh! don't disturb your pose," begged one of the others. "That photographer is getting ready."

"Well, what does Doro mean by laughing?" complained Rose-Mary, otherwise Cologne.

"I mean to say," said Doro, quietly, "that you girls all amuse me. Of course we've been pushed this half—and especially this last month."

"And Olaine has done it!" declared Edna.

"Quite so. It was her business to. Do you realize that is what Mrs. Pangborn hired her for? And it's too bad she isn't going to stay."

"Not going to stay?" cried one.

"Olaine just delighted in pushing us," observed another.

"Of course she did," Tavia said to the last speaker. "Doesn't Doro point out the fact that ~~that was~~ her job here?"

"And isn't it going to be her job after this term?" demanded Edna Black.

"Oh!" cried another girl. "This combination of Doro Dale and Tavia Travers knows everything!"

"If that is so, they might scatter some of their intelligence among the faithful," drawled Cologne,

"First, *why* should we accept Olaine as a slave driver, and thank her for it?" demanded Edna.

"Because this graduating class has higher marks and 'does Mrs. Pangborn proud' more than any class ever graduated from Glenwood. Didn't you know that?" replied Dorothy.

"And I guess we can thank Olaine," said Tavia, nodding. "I know *I* can."

"And I! And I!" chorused others.

"She was awful crusty about it," said Molly, "but she *did* know how to make us climb."

"We're some climbers," remarked Tavia, airily. "I've got so high myself that I feel dizzy."

"But say! about Olaine. Is she really going to leave?" impatiently demanded one miss who could not keep her mind on the main point.

"Wait!" commanded Dorothy. "The man is going to take the pictures. Do be still now."

"Steady, my hearties," drawled Tavia; but her lips hardly moved.

There was silence all over the great lawn. It was then that the aviator—had he flown over the

spot suddenly—might have thought the white of lawn and roses heaps of unsullied snow, for the girls were just as still as they could be.

“Thank you, young ladies. That is all!” shouted a little, fat man in tall hat and frock-coat. “We will not trouble you longer.”

And in a minute the groups were broken up, and the girls in white were flitting here and there over the green. So much was going on before the bell rang for the graduation class to march to the hall that the question about Miss Olaine was not just then answered.

But Dorothy showed Tavia two letters she had received that morning from Dalton. The outside envelope was addressed to her in the large, rather stiff lettering of Tom Moran; but inside there was a little pink note enclosed with the red-headed young man’s letter.

“Dear little Celia!” exclaimed Tavia. “Let me read it, Doro.”

And the difficult little scrawl from “jes’ the cutest little thing” brought both laughter and tears to the eyes of tender-hearted Tavia:

““My loverly, dere miss Doroty Dale:

‘My teacher says she will look ove this letter for mistaks; but she says to ime larnin fast as can be. I wuz goin to kep hous for Tom Moran but he says no not yet sometime praps. I gotter go to

schol fust. But Tom Moran is got a big, big house and hes got furnchure an pitchers an things an he says he is goin to let a lady come and kep hous for us till i git bigger. Her name is Olain and he says she is goin to be lik aunty was to me, only better. So no more now from one that lovs you lots you no your little Celia.' "

"Then it's going to be—really?" demanded Tavia, of her chum.

"About Miss Olaine?"

"Yes."

"Open the other note," commanded Dorothy.

And that frank letter from Tom Moran delighted Tavia quite as much as did the mis-spelled one from Celia. Tom had stopped at the school when he had brought Celia away from Mrs. Hogan's. And he had asked to see, and had been closeted in the office for an hour with, no other than Miss Rebecca Olaine!

"And I saw that ring on her finger when she went in," Tavia had whispered to Dorothy, on that now long past occasion. "And it was still on her finger when she came out."

But the interested schoolmates did not know for sure "that it was all fixed" until this day when Tom Moran's letter had come to Dorothy.

Miss Olaine had never shown the chums any particular friendliness; that was not her way. But,

as they were strolling up to Number Nineteen for a last "prinking" before the exercises in the chapel, the teacher passed them in the corridor.

"Come and have tea this afternoon in my room, young ladies," she said, quite as though she were giving a command instead of an invitation.

"Of course we will, dear Miss Olaine," cried Dorothy, brightly. "We will be delighted to."

The grim teacher flushed. When she flushed her eyes twinkled and she looked happier than the girls had ever seen her look before.

"Do you really mean that, Dorothy Dale?" she asked, quickly.

"Mean what?" questioned Dorothy, in surprise.

"That you will take pleasure in drinking tea with me?"

"Why, Miss Olaine, no invitation could have given me so much pleasure to-day—and I am sure Tavia feels the same."

"I—I am afraid I did not understand you girls very well when first I came here to Glenwood," said Miss Olaine, gravely.

"Oh, dear Miss Olaine! we did not understand you either!" cried Dorothy.

"And I was real *mean* to you," said Tavia, brokenly. "But now——"

The impulsive girl threw her arms about Miss Olaine's neck and whispered in her ear: "We're so, so happy about you and Tom Moran! For

you'll love Celia, too, and you all will have such a fine time together!"

Miss Olaine blushed more deeply at that, and looked very much confused. "You—you'll really come, girls?" she repeated, and then fairly ran into her room and closed the door.

A little later the bell began to peal. The graduating class gathered in the porch. Dorothy and Tavia were at the head of the line. The others took their places. Dear little Miss Mingle began to play the march on the piano.

"Hay foot, straw foot!" whispered Tavia, bound to joke even on so serious an occasion.

They led the procession down the steps. As they approached the chapel the organ broke forth in the same march Miss Mingle had begun. The audience room was already crowded, save for the seats reserved for the graduating class.

"Oh! my father!" whispered Tavia.

"And my father, and Aunt Winnie," whispered Dorothy, in return.

With sparkling eyes the girls took their seats upon the platform. There was singing, and announcements, and speaking, and the girls filled in their own part of the program—Dorothy with the valedictory, Cologne with quite a serious paper, Nita, as class poet, and Tavia as class historian.

It was almost like a dream to Dorothy Dale—the speaking, the music, the applause which fol-

lowed the reading of her own paper, and all that was said and done. Mrs. Pangborn finally came forward and two of the smallest girls in the school held the basket of blue-ribboned diplomas.

"My prize class," said the principal, rather brokenly, "is leaving me and leaving Glenwood forever. You fathers and mothers must see your children go out into the world one at a time. But you seldom know the wrench of parting with so many bright faces at once.

"And this happens to me year after year. Just as I get to know them all, to understand their different dispositions, to learn all their lovable traits, they leave me. And, perhaps, just as they begin to see that I am their friend and loving helper instead of their taskmistress, they graduate. Ah, if they carry from Glenwood something that shall make their future lives sweeter, nobler——"

Dorothy could not hear what else she said for she could not see Mrs. Pangborn through her falling tears and without sight hearing seemed to leave her, too. Pictures of the past, of her many achievements here at Glenwood, and fun and frolic as well, passed before her eyes. And then——

"Miss Dorothy Dale!"

Mrs. Pangborn's voice was steady again. Tavia gave her friend a slight push.

Dorothy Dale went forward to receive her diploma.

CHAPTER XXX

“GOODNIGHT, GLENWOOD, GOD BLESS YOU!”

“AM I not proud of my Little Captain?” said Major Dale, leaning on Dorothy’s shoulder as they slowly wended their way out of doors.

Roger was at her other hand, and Joe nearby. The boys had left their own school a day or two early to come and “see sister graduate.” Aunt Winnie had congratulated “her daughter,” as she was proud to call Dorothy, too.

“Ned and Nat are only sorry that they could not come. Indeed, I had forbade it. We will go to their college instead to help them ‘receive’ on Commencement Day,” Aunt Winnie declared.

“And there is a big surprise in store for you, my dear,” she added, pinching Dorothy’s cheek; but what it was we can only learn when we meet Dorothy and her friends again in “Dorothy Dale in the West.”

Now there was so very, very much to do in getting ready to leave old Glenwood for the last time. The girls had yet to pack; they would sleep one more night in the old room. Then the class would scatter, perhaps never to meet again!

Of course there were hundreds of promises to write and to visit, and plans for the summer were being discussed right and left. Dorothy felt more serious than she ever had felt before; but Tavia was so excited that she could scarcely keep both feet on the ground at once.

"You are really glad to leave dear old Glenwood," said Dorothy, after they had drunk tea with Miss Olaine and come up to their room again.

"I never did like school as you do, Dorothy. But I love the old crowd, and I'm sorry to lose the fun we have here," Tavia admitted.

"The whole world's before us now," sighed Dorothy.

"Dish-washing, and sweeping, and bed-making, and all that is before your humble servant," laughed Tavia. "I'm going home, as you know, to keep father's house for him spick and span. Mother will be glad. She hates housework."

They packed their trunks more soberly than they had ever packed them for removal from the school before. Down from the walls came every keepsake and picture that they owned.

"Nix on the decorations!" Tavia said. "Jumble them all into the boxes. Never more shall they hang from the battlements——"

"What a lot of them there are, too?" sighed Dorothy. "Not half room in this box for my photographs."

"We might throw away all the boys' photographs," said Tavia, giggling. "You know, we have foresworn boys. Is that right, Doro?"

"Oh, yes; boys are only a nuisance—except our brothers and cousins. Don't you say so, Tavia?"

"Sure! And a few thousand more," she added, *sotto voce*. "But we're going to marry twins if we marry at all. *That* is decided, Doro?"

"Certainly," returned Dorothy, gravely.

It was growing late. The nine o'clock bell meant nothing to the girls of Glenwood Hall this night. There was bustle in every room, laughter in the corridors, and a running back and forth until late. Suddenly Tavia had an idea. It grew out of the over-crammed boxes and trunks of "loot" from the walls.

"Goody-goody-gander! I've got it!" she announced to Dorothy.

"I know you have—St. Vitus's dance," groaned Dorothy. "I have been expecting the announcement for ever so long."

"Miss Smartie!" responded Tavia. "You'll see."

She flew about, whispering to the other graduates. In half an hour, just as Dorothy and Tavia themselves were in their nighties and boudoir caps, a knock came at the door, it flew open, and there filed into Nineteen almost the whole class with arms full of a "great debris" of articles, as

Tavia called them, which had plainly been torn from the walls of the various rooms.

"Come on, Doro," giggled Tavia. "This is a donation party. We're going to donate to the girls who are left such adornments, and the like, as we do not wish to carry away with us. You know—'We who are about to die salute you,' and all that. Come on!"

Dorothy entered into the spirit of the affair. There were many trophies and pictures that would merely gather dust in the attic at North Birchlands, she knew; she grabbed for these, and the procession took up its march from room to room.

The lights had been left turned on in the halls; even if the girls were in bed they were routed out to receive the donation from the departing class. Mrs. Pangborn—even Miss Olaine—were conveniently blind and deaf.

Tavia made the most extravagant speeches. The most ridiculous presents were given with a ceremony that convulsed everybody. It was a fine, hilarious time.

"Oh, and the last bit of fun we shall ever have in old Glenwood Hall," said Cologne, sadly, as empty-armed at last, the big girls made their way back to Nineteen.

"We'll never have so much fun again, no matter where we go," sighed Ned Ebony.

"Never is a long time, Neddie," said Dorothy, cheerfully.

Molly Richards had her arms around Dorothy. "Miss Cheerfulness!" she said. "When the skies are gray and the birds do not sing, Doro Dale will always be exuding sunshine—eh?"

"And we'll all miss you—oh! *so* much, Doro!" cried Nita Brent.

"We'll miss each other," admitted Dorothy. "But let us hope, even if we do say good-bye to Glenwood and the old crowd, that we'll all meet again some time."

Tavia had been strumming on the banjo strings lightly, not having packed that joy-giving instrument. She broke out suddenly into the old school chant—and they joined her, softly:

"Good night! good night! good night! good night!

Good night, again; God bless you!

And oh, until we meet again,

Good night! good night! God bless you!"

The echoes of their sweet young voices died away. They kissed each other warmly and in silence. Then the others stole out of the old room that Dorothy and Tavia had occupied so long, leaving the two chums to the silence of the June night and their own thoughts.

THE END.

